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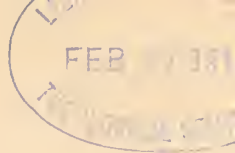
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THE



MINOR WORKS

OF

✓
JOSEPH JOHN GURNEY.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOLUME THE FIRST.

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E S S A Y

ON

THE HABITUAL EXERCISE OF LOVE TO GOD,

CONSIDERED

As a Preparation for Heaven.



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ESSAY.

SECTION I.

GENERAL REMARKS ON MEETNESS FOR THE HEAVENLY STATE.

MUCH of the happiness which is here permitted to man arises from the exercise of kindly feelings. When benevolence leads us to seek the welfare of others, and our hearts are enlarged in good will and charity, our condition of mind is unquestionably one of pleasure to ourselves. Again, when the objects of our purest and warmest affections are granted to us—when we enjoy their company and conversation, and when our kindness towards them is met by an equal return—this is a source of unrivalled temporal joy. Nor can it be denied, that the purity and height of this joy are just in proportion to the *moral excellence* of the objects of our love.

These remarks may, perhaps, afford us some faint glimpse of the happiness of those purified spirits, in whom love is for ever fixed as a predominant principle. The Being to whom their affections are supremely directed is infinitely lovely, shewing forth the glorious perfection of every moral beauty; and he now rewards

them with the fulness of his favour. While they are brought unspeakably near to him, and enjoy an unclouded view of his righteousness, they know that he is their eternal portion; they can say in truth, "This God is our God for ever and ever." Well, therefore, might the sacred writers exclaim, "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that LOVE HIM."¹

Heaven is the abode of perfect purity and peace. Nothing is there left to separate the soul of man from God, the fountain of his happiness; the promise of pardon has already been realised by its inhabitants; their sins are abolished; Satan tempts and buffets them no longer; the pure affections of the regenerate mind are triumphant in the saints; and, under the unrestricted influences of the Holy Ghost, they are made partakers of the most exalted communion with the Father and with the Son.

If such is the nature of the joys of heaven, it plainly follows that the wicked are absolutely destitute of a capacity to receive them—the enemies of God cannot breathe that pure and delightful element! To suppose that a rebel spirit, impregnated with bitterness, and long accustomed to worship *self*, in preference to the Creator and Redeemer, should find its happiness in the full sunshine of the divine presence, is to suppose, not only the subversion of retributive justice, but a moral and even physical impossibility. Whatever may have been the intellectual creed or high profession of such a person, his false confidence

¹ 1 Cor. ii, 9; *comp.* Isa. lxiv, 4.

must for ever fail him ; under the influence of awful terror, he must descend into regions of darkness. In heaven, assuredly, he can have no life, much less enjoyment ; for there all is *light*, and in that light, all is *love*.²

“Heaven,” said an eloquent and experienced preacher, “can be no place of happiness to the wicked. Do we not learn from Scripture, that the pleasures of the heavenly state consist in the immediate presence of a holy God and Saviour—in purity—in worship, and perpetual service—in an entire conformity of the will to that of the Deity—in union with him? But every one of these things is here a cross, yea, a cross unbearable, to the wicked, who flies from the presence of God, refuses to come to Christ, delights in impure indulgencies, shuns both private prayer and public worship, and rebels against the divine law written in Scripture, and engraven on the heart. To such a soul, when disembodied, the joys and exercises of heaven would be impossible ; or, if possible, intolerable,—even the extremest misery—especially after a long course of degradation, in which the *habit of ungodliness* has been fully formed.”

“If the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth there it shall

² “My chief conception of heaven,” said Robert Hall to Wilberforce, “is *rest*.” “Mine,” replied Wilberforce, “is *love*—love to God, and love to every bright and happy inhabitant of that glorious place.” Hall was an almost constant sufferer from acute bodily pain ; Wilberforce *enjoyed* life, and was all amiability and sunshine ; so that it is easy to account for their respective conceptions on this subject. What a mercy that both these conceptions are true !

be.”³ That there is a solemn meaning couched under this simple metaphor, no Christian can doubt. It seems to describe the change, so rapidly coming upon us all, of probation for eternal fixedness, when the awful sentence will be heard, “He that is unjust, let him be unjust *still*; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy *still*; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous *still*; and he that is holy, let him be holy *still*.”⁴ But the tree will not only lie as it falls; it will also fall as it *leans*; and the great question which every man ought to bring home to his own bosom, without a moment’s delay, is this—What is the *inclination* of my soul? Does it, with all its affections, lean *towards* God or *from* him?⁵

³ Eccl. xi, 3.

⁴ Rev. xxii, 11.

⁵ It is observed, by a powerful anonymous writer of the present day, that the mixture of good and evil belongs only to this probationary state; and that every spirit separated from the body must, by a sort of natural consequence or physical necessity, fly off on the one side or the other, according as it is affected towards God and holiness; for, in the world to come, there is no further amalgamation between good and evil; but an irresistible avulsion of the one from the other. “Of every human spirit it may be said, that it possesses or not that *affection to God*, which, when freed from the embarrassments that here surround us, will spring up toward its object—will break away exultant from every defilement—and connect the created to the uncreated Spirit, between which a real alliance had already taken place. Has then the soul, at the moment when its active powers are broken up, and when it is launched upon the severed elements of good and evil, been quickened toward the moral perfections of the Supreme Being? Has it yet entertained or not the rudiment of love, of loyalty, and of submission to the divine government? Is it affiliated to God, or is it estranged and in rebellion? Does it abhor the contamination of its present state? Has it sympathy with the worship that encircles the throne of the Most High? Or is it destitute both of the emotions and of the

That the *bent* of all men, in their unregenerate state, is in the wrong direction, Scripture, experience, and history, unite in bearing testimony. Man by nature is the child of wrath; he has inherited from his first parents, in the fall, a proneness to sin; and his distinguishing characteristic is the *absence of that love to God*, which is absolutely indispensable to true virtue and happiness, both here and hereafter. Hence it follows, beyond all doubt or question, that we must be “born again”—that we must undergo a radical and inward change—before we can live to the glory of God in this world, or be fitted for the enjoyment of his presence in the world to come. “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”⁶

When, therefore, we speak of a *meetness* for the heavenly state, the main object which we must always keep in view is the “washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.” When the apostle thanks God, “who has made us *meet* to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light,” he describes, in the parallel words, the true ground of that meetness—“Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath *translated* us into the kingdom of his dear Son.”⁷ The Spirit of God alone can so rectify the natural dispositions of the depraved heart

habits of grateful and joyous adoration? * * * * Is the soul alive to God or not? *Do we look to him for our pleasures?* The answer to these questions must discriminate spirit from spirit, when each in its moral element only, enters the world where moral elements are parted.”—*Saturday Evening*, p. 390.

⁶ John iii, 3, 5.

⁷ Col. i, 12, 13.

of man, and so create him anew in Christ Jesus, as to render him capable of a participation in the joys of eternal purity.

If then we would attain to a capacity for those pleasures which are at the right-hand of our God for ever, we must yield up our souls in ready obedience to the visitations of the Holy Spirit; that his enlightening and enlivening influence may assimilate all within us to its own nature. Now this divine influence—this free gift of God through our Lord Jesus Christ—springs from love, and leads to it. By teaching and enabling us to love God with all our heart, and all our soul, it will prepare us for that kingdom of which *love* is the joy for ever.⁸

In effecting this blessed change in the affections of fallen man, the Holy Spirit makes use of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, as his grand, appointed instrument. That gospel, written in the Holy Scriptures, and preached by the Lord's messengers, is a spiritual weapon of heavenly mould; and, when wielded by a divine hand, it penetrates the heart, and becomes "the power of God unto salvation." Con-

⁸ "The kingdom of heaven," said our Saviour, "is like unto leaven which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened:" Matt xiii, 33. I conceive that this parable has a double meaning; that it relates first to the spread of the gospel in the world, and secondly to the growth of grace in the heart. "As the property of leaven is to change or assimilate to its own nature, the meal or dough with which it is mixed, so the property of the grace of Christ, is to change the whole soul into its own likeness; and God intends that this principle should continue in the soul till all is leavened; till the whole bear the image of the heavenly, as it before bore the image of the earthly."—See *Dr. A. Clarke, Com. in loc.*

vinced of sin, humbled under a feeling of its malignity, and broken down into repentance, the sinner often passes through a long and painful season of inward conflict; but at length he finds rest for his soul in the Lord Jesus Christ. His sins are freely forgiven him for the sake of that Redeemer, who bore the penalty of them on the cross; “the handwriting of ordinances” which was against him, is washed out in the blood of the everlasting covenant; and now, as a reconciled and adopted child, he is brought into a dispensation of *peace* and *love* towards God our Father. Himself the object of divine compassion, he loves God in return; and, under the impulse of gratitude for all his mercies, and especially for the unspeakable gift of *such* a Saviour, he devotes himself without reserve to the service of his Creator.

Such is the genuine character of conversion “from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God,” through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. And here it may be well for us to remember, to the “praise of the glory” of divine “grace,” that such a change sometimes take place at the eleventh hour of the day. Such cases as those of the thief on the cross, and of the Earl of Rochester, afford an illustrious evidence, that the sovereign mercy of God contains in itself the grand preparative for immortal glory. They shew that it is the means of inspiring—sometimes even at a late and unexpected moment—that deep self-abasement on the one hand, and, on the other, that exalted love and gratitude towards God, by which the soul may be fitted even for the bliss of angels.

But for the most part the Christian’s preparation

for heaven is slow and gradual; and he ought never to forget that the fruits of the Spirit—especially its most important fruit, *love to God*,—must not only be produced, but *ripened* for eternity. Through many a temptation, and many a conflict with the powers of darkness, the work of sanctification must go forward unto the perfect day. The believer must never relax in his efforts; by watchfulness and prayer, by the “armour of righteousness, on the right hand and on the left,” by the constant exercise of pure affections, he must work out his “own salvation with fear and trembling.” “A man must be purified,” said the preacher already cited, “before he can enjoy eternal purity. He must be accustomed to keep company with Christ here, in order to enjoy, or even to bear, his immediate presence hereafter. He must have learned to draw very near to the throne of grace, he must be trained by the Spirit to a devotional *habit* of soul, before he can endure the unveiled glory of God’s *perfect holiness*.”

Well, indeed, is the Christian aware that he can contribute nothing to these purposes, in his own strength; but he lives by “faith in the Son of God,” and follows the guidance of the Holy Spirit:—it is “God” that “worketh” in him, “to will and to do of his good pleasure.”⁹ Thus it is that he gradually attains to the experience of the apostolic doctrine, that “if any man be in Christ, it is a new creation;”¹ old things are passed away; behold all things are become new—the “wilderness and the solitary place” are

⁹ Phil. ii, 12, 13.

¹ καὶ ἡ κτίσις, 2 Cor. v, 17.

“glad” for him—the “desert” rejoices and blossoms “as the rose!”²

We may rest assured, that there is not a saint in heaven, who would not say, as the apostle did on earth, “By the grace of God I am what I am.” But while our preparation for the heavenly state must be explicitly ascribed to divine grace, we know that this saving influence finds us in a world of probation—a scene of action and of suffering, in which it is the will of our all-wise Creator to *educate* us for eternity. The circumstances in which we are placed, the opportunities afforded us of duty or improvement, our own capacities and faculties, the incitements to virtue and checks upon vice, with which we are furnished in the moral government of God, our pleasures and our sorrows, the very taunts and temptations of this wicked world, must all be applied, with watchfulness and prayer, to the great object of our being. In constant dependence on divine grace, we must use them diligently as so many talents committed to our stewardship—God is ever ready to sanctify them to his faithful and believing children.

It is of especial importance to observe, that, while the believer in Jesus is graciously delivered from the dominion of sin, *he continues to be subject, like other men, to those natural laws which regulate the movements, and form the constitution, of the human mind.* Since these laws belong to the nature which God has given us, and cannot cease to operate—at least in our present state of being—the Christian must not disregard them. On the contrary, he ought to be ever on

² Isa. xxxv, 1.

the watch to maintain their right balance, and to direct their native influence to wise and holy purposes.

It is one of the most remarkable of these laws, that *our passive sensations are weakened by the repetition of impressions, just as our active propensities are strengthened by the repetition of actions.* This law, so universal in its scope and operation, is a bountiful provision, by which our heavenly Father alleviates the pains, and facilitates the duties, of his creature man. Those who are exposed to a frequent recurrence of pain or sorrow; those who are reminded, by every surrounding object, of relatives whom they have lost; those whose callings in life are of an arduous nature; those whose principles are put to the test by frequently repeated temptation—have all abundant reason to be thankful for this law of our nature. Yet is it a general law. It extends not only to our hurtful and painful impressions, but to others of a beneficial character; and here it requires to be checked or balanced by the gradual formation, and habitual exercise, of active principles.

Important indeed is our Lord's precept—"Take heed how ye hear."³ In his character of a preacher of divine truth, Paul declared himself to be "a savour of death unto death" to some, as well as "of life unto life" to others. The same may be said of that gospel of which he was a minister. If it be not cordially accepted and imbibed—if time after time it be resisted, and sin and the world preferred to it—our capacity for profiting from it, will be diminished by every repetition—our death in trespasses and sins will

³ Luke viii, 18.

be deepened and confirmed ! Nor ought the religious man to forget that he also has a part in these warnings. The discourses to which he loves to listen, and the passages which he delights to read, will produce less and less effect upon him, unless the lessons presented to him are steadily acted on, and are thus *wrought* into his mental constitution. His purest affections will soon wither, if they be not—under the influence of the Spirit of God—nurtured and matured by *good habit*.

The highest affection of which mankind are capable, is *love to God*; and this love cannot fail to be excited in our minds when we are quickened, by the Spirit, to a sense of his goodness. Yet even this affection will be sure to grow cool, if it be not cultivated. Our capacity of being impressed by the ever-recurring proofs of God's benevolence towards us, will lessen as they are reiterated; and, except this tendency to decay be counteracted by the working of a living principle within us, we shall soon become liable to that awful rebuke—"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast *left thy first love*."⁴ The soul of the believer must be habituated to action; it must maintain a steady energy towards the sovereign object of its desire; no false rest must be taken up—it must always be moving forwards in that holy way which leads to God, and happiness, and heaven. Then, indeed, the work of religion will prosper in our experience. Although the first blaze of fervour, which often distinguishes the new convert, may subside into a calm, the pure affection of love to God,

⁴ Rev. ii, 4.

will be settled in our souls—it will imbue and characterise our new nature—with a perpetual increase of true brightness, it will burn for ever!⁵ “Away with these filthy garments,” said the pious William Law, when very near his death, “I feel a fire kindled within me, which will consume every thing of a nature contrary to itself, and ascend as a flame of divine love, to all eternity!”

⁵ The progressive work of religion in the soul, may be illustrated by *water* as well as *fire*. It is *living* water that Jesus Christ bestows on those who are athirst for God: see John iv, 10. “He calls the grace of the Holy Spirit *water*,” says Theophylact on this passage, “because it cleanses, and affords great refreshment to those who drink it; not *stagnant* water, such as we find in a corrupt state, in pools and wells, but *living*, that is bubbling and leaping up—water in motion. For the grace of the Spirit excites the soul to perpetual motion towards that which is good—ever disposing it to *ascend*. Paul had drunk of this living and ever-moving water, *when he forgot the things which were behind, and reached forth towards those which were before.*”

SECTION II.

ON THE CONTEMPLATION OF GOD, IN NATURE AND PROVIDENCE.

THE preceding remarks are by no means *exclusively* applicable to those overt acts of obedience and service, by which the Christian seeks to glorify the God whom he loves. These occupy their own province—and that province an important one—in the work of preparation for heaven; they react on him who performs them, and confirm the love from which they spring. But there are acts of the *soul alone*, known only to ourselves and to our Creator, which have a strong tendency to impart steadiness and brightness to that flame of affection and gratitude towards God, which burns in the bosom of the believer. The first of these is the *contemplation of God*.

That *love* should excite *love*, is a principle which God has interwoven with our very nature. This principle pervades all our family and social relations, and exercises a mighty influence over every department of human society; but it is called into its best and highest action, by the beneficence of God himself. In contemplating *Him* as the supreme object of our love,

our attention can scarcely fail to be directed to the precious doctrine that “he first loved us”—a doctrine plainly manifested to us in the book of *nature* and *providence*.

That this book, as far as relates to the attributes of God, is very imperfectly read without the aid of revelation, the history of mankind affords abundant evidence. We find that evidenee in the works of the ancient heathen philosophers, whose views of the Supreme Being were, after all their researches, partial and incomplete. Still more pereceptible and glaring is it, among a certain class of modern philosophers, who have *disregarded* Christianity; and who in the midst of a wondrous development of nature’s secrets, have forgotten and even denied nature’s God. But to contemplate God *in his works*, under the beaming light of the religion of the Bible, is one of the most profitable exercises of the human mind; it cannot fail to imbue us with filial love and gratitude towards the Author of our being.

If we would love God sincerely and fervently, let us first contemplate him as our *Father by creation*; let us call to mind, that a few years since we *were not*, but now *are*—that we possess not only animal life, but a rational and imperishable soul—and that both are his gift—the spontaneous results of his wisdom, power, and love.

On the gift of our *being*, all his other gifts *to us* are obviously contingent; but let us reflect on the *manner* in which he has formed us—on the capacities of body and mind with which we are endowed! “I will praise thee,” said David, “for I am *fearfully* and

wonderfully made; marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well.”¹

These words of inspired thanksgiving are in full agreement with the wonders of modern anatomy. What Christian, who knows any thing of these wonders, can consider his own bodily frame, without being *astonished* at the wisdom and goodness of God? The complexity and nicety of the machine; the perfect ease with which it works,—every part being made for use and comfort, and no part for pain; the various joints, each of that peculiar mechanism which suits it to its place; the muscles, with their power of contraction for the purpose of motion, and pulling against each other, to keep the body even; the heart, a forcing pump, beating a hundred thousand times in a day, but never growing weary; the blood, for ever circulating, fed with chyle in one part of its passage, and enlivened with pure air in another; the conversion of that blood, by some mysterious action, into all the other fluids of the body; the chemistry of the stomach; the sensibility and sightliness of the skin; the organs of sense, each furnished with its own class of nerves, and fitted with the most consummate skill to its peculiar objects; the scientifically formed cavities and tight drum of the ear; the refracting lenses, the directing muscles, the cleansing tears, the protecting lids and lashes, and the pictured retina of the eye—all these and a multitude of other particulars, are worthy of our grateful meditation, and ought surely to excite both our wonder and our praise.

But how much more admirable is the constitution

¹ Ps. cxxxix, 14—16.

of the mind, with all its subtle powers of sensation, consciousness, reflexion, reasoning, memory, invention and imagination ! shall we mark these powers and enjoy their action—shall we delight ourselves in the facility with which our thoughts range the universe—and not learn to love that bounteous Being who made us what we are ?

But our capacities would be of little worth without corresponding objects ; and we must contemplate the Deity, not only as our Creator, but as the gracious Author of those provisions by which our faculties are excited to action, and all our wants supplied. External nature teems with such provisions ; and the exactness of their suitability to us, affords sufficient evidence, that if man is made for the world, the world is also made for man. Here we may freely mingle the most obvious and familiar observations, with the discoveries of modern science ; all combine to multiply our proofs of the benevolence of our heavenly Father. It seems almost needless to advert to particulars ; but the religious man will find abundant cause for gratitude towards his Creator, when he meditates on the existence and properties of light and heat ; on the alternations of day and night ; on the arrangement of the seasons ; on the nature of the atmosphere ; on the magnetic influence, directing the mariner's compass ; on the even and moderate temperature of the earth's surface ; on the universal law of gravitation ; on the endless supplies, and multiplied uses, of water ; on the ocean, with its faculty of evaporation ; on the mighty agency of steam ; on the gradual detrition of rocks into fertile soils ; on

the vast provisions of animal and vegetable food, each zone of the earth producing the kind of aliment which its inhabitants require ; on the green carpeting of nature ; on the profusion of her flowers ; on all her glorious scenery !

Did not the earth turn upon her axis—had she no motion round the sun—was her bulk less or greater than it is—was the law of gravitation reversed—was the atmosphere differently composed, or did it refuse to vibrate so as to convey sound—was light incapable of refraction—did water exist only in the form of ice—had the rocks of the earth's surface never crumbled—was nature destitute of vegetation—was she clothed in scarlet instead of green—where would be the happiness or even the life of man ?

The harmony which is, on a broad scale, so obvious between the *faculties* of man and his *circumstances*, is the general result of innumerable *pairs of things* ; every one of which affords a distinct evidence of the goodness of God. Take, for example, the *lungs* and the *air*. Viewed in connexion with the cavity of bones in which they are safely lodged, with their peculiar set of blood-vessels, with their wrapping membrane, with their air-tubes, and with the muscles which keep them in perpetual motion, the lungs present an illustrious example of mechanism adapted to its end. No less remarkable is the chemical science displayed in that peculiar combination of pure and impure gases, which forms the air. The mechanism can have had no tendency to give birth to the chemistry, nor the chemistry, to construct the machine ; but both are found working together, in perfect har-

mony, for the health and life of animals. Was either the machinery of the lungs, or the combination of gases in the air, in any respect different from what they now are, (and different they might have been in ten thousand ways) all would have been pain and misery, or, perhaps, death, to living creatures. Why, then, are these operations of nature precisely what we find them to be? Why are they thus matched and assorted for our good? Surely, because the hand which formed the lungs, and composed the air, is a hand, not only of unrivalled skill, but of tender mercy.

“These are thy glorious works, parent of good,
 Almighty, thine this universal frame,
 Thus wondrous fair, thyself how wondrous then!
 Unspeakable; who sit'st above the heavens,
 To us invisible, or dimly seen
 In these thy lowest works; yet these declare
 Thy goodness beyond thought, and power divine.”

MILTON.

The gift to man of the inferior animals, for other uses besides food, is another point which ought to excite our gratitude. How great are the benefits which he derives from the camel, the elephant, the dog, the ox, and the horse! What cause has he to be thankful for the hide, the fleece, and the furs of the north, just suited to its frosts! Who can observe a multitude of silk worms, burying themselves in their own exquisite manufacture; and thus administering to us abundant material, not merely for soft clothing, but for the wealth of nations,—without admiring the *kindness* of divine Providence?

There is a fitness in the outward creation to the *mental*, as well as to the *bodily*, capacities of man.

It is by his mind that he detects the secrets of nature, unfolds her beauties, and, through many an ingenious process, applies her materials to his use. This fact has no tendency to weaken the evidence afforded, by *the supplies of nature*, of the goodness of God. On the contrary, it adds another link, of immense value, to the chain of that evidence. The more we dive into the hidden capabilities of the world in which we dwell, and multiply, by science or art, our own means of comfort and happiness—the larger will be our proof of the goodness of God; the stronger his claim upon ourselves, for gratitude and love.

But while God causes his sun to shine, and his rain to fall, on the just and on the unjust, his reconciled and obedient children alone are, in one sense, the *true* inheritors of the earth. “All things are theirs; because they are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.” The Christian is in possession of a touch-stone by which he can apply every thing around him to his soul’s benefit; he knows how to appropriate even the *charms* of nature.

“ His are the mountains, and the valleys his,
And the resplendent rivers; his t’ enjoy
With a propriety which none can feel,
But who, with filial confidence inspired,
Can lift to heaven an unpresumptuous eye,
And smiling say, ‘ My Father made them all ! ’
Are they not his, by a peculiar right,
And by an emphasis of interest his,
Whose eye they fill with tears of holy joy,
Whose heart with praise, and whose exalted mind,
With worthy thoughts of that unwearied LOVE,
That plann’d and built, and still upholds, a world
So cloth’d with beauty, for rebellious man ? ”

COWPER.

There is, however, another ground on which the Christian possesses peculiar advantage, in contemplating God as the Author of nature. He is taught in the Scriptures, that, while God is infinite in power, and perfect in wisdom, he is himself a blind earth-worm—the very child of darkness and ignorance. He meets, therefore, only with *what he expects*, when he finds himself checked and limited, on every side, in his investigation of natural things—when he discovers that there is, in the material works of God, a magnitude on the one hand, and a minuteness on the other, which defy all his powers both of inquiry and conception. Again, while he can love and praise the God of nature, for his innumerable bounties, he never thinks of regarding this lower world as the scene of uninterrupted enjoyment and repose. He knows that it is a fallen world, deeply injured by sin; and that death and destruction are now permitted, for wise purposes, to range over its surface. His faith in the goodness of God, therefore, is in no degree unsettled by the poisonous herb or the rattle-snake, by the fangs of the tiger or the vulture, by the storm, the earthquake, or the pestilence. While he accepts with gratitude the satisfactions afforded him by visible things, he can be thankful even for those *checks and interruptions* which remind him that his present life is but a vapour—that he is only a pilgrim on his journey to another world, where sorrow, suffering, sin and death, are no more.

Yet it ought not to be forgotten, that, in the gifts which she bestows, and the deprivations or dangers which she inflicts, nature maintains a system of balance

and compensation—a system which plainly evinces both the wisdom and kindness of her Almighty Author.

“ Liberal, not lavish, is kind nature’s hand ;
Nor was perfection made for man below.
Yet all her schemes with nicest art are plann’d,
Good counteracting ill, and gladness woe.
With gold and gems if Chilian mountains glow—
If bleak and barren Scotia’s hills arise—
There plague and poison, lust and rapine grow :
Here peaceful are the vales, and pure the skies ;
And freedom fires the soul, and sparkles in the eyes.”

BEATTIE.

Again, there is every reason to believe, that God governs his material universe by *general laws* ; and, although these laws may, in particular cases, be the occasion of suffering, there can be no doubt that they are, on the whole, productive of enjoyment to his living creatures, as well as of his own glory. We may indeed conclude, that no *other laws* could be equally efficacious for these purposes. While, therefore, the Christian is taught to trace all suffering of *sin*, as its original cause, he can admire the wisdom and loving-kindness of God, in establishing a method of government over nature, of which the *main* tendency is still unquestionably found to be happy and beneficial.

Among the choicest blessings of the God of nature must be reckoned our *social affections*, considered in connexion with their appropriate objects—the *social relations*. The two, together, are productive of a vast amount of comfort and happiness, even in this uncertain and sorrowful world ; and they afford a clear evidence of the loving-kindness of Jehovah, towards his rational creature man. How often do

they alleviate the miseries of the wretched, and check the cruelties of the depraved; and how sweet are the pleasures which they impart to the more amiable and virtuous among mankind! Yet even these, the fairest flowers which earth produces, bloom but to die; and nothing can supply the void which the loss of them occasions, but the elevated hopes of the Christian believer. To him, the proof which the social affections present of the benevolence of our Creator, is wonderfully enhanced and strengthened; because, when they are *sanctified*, they produce a tenfold happiness. Being brought into subordination to the love of God, they now occupy their *right* province; they are at once confirmed and *refined*; above all, they act in harmony with higher things, and are blended with that fellowship in the gospel of Christ, which shall endure for ever.

If we derive material aid from the Christian revelation, in contemplating God as the Author of nature, that aid is still more essential when we consider him in the order of his *providence*, and as the moral Governor of the world. The Christian, who knows that his Redeemer has “brought life and immortality to light by the gospel,” is alone in *full* possession of the key which unlocks the mysteries of natural religion. If the tendency of vice to produce misery, and of virtue to generate happiness, is here liable to many interruptions—the Scriptures assure us, on divine authority, that in an unseen and awful future, that tendency will accomplish its end, and will finally triumph over every obstruction.

“ Enough for us to know that this dark state,
In wayward passions lost and vain pursuits,—
This infancy of being,—cannot prove
The final issue of the works of God,
By boundless love and perfect wisdom formed,
And ever rising with the *rising mind*.” THOMSON.

In the mean time, the *Christian* can study the page of history, and observe the events which are rapidly passing in this dark world of change, with instruction to his own mind, and thankfulness to God. There is a light upon his mind, which often reveals to him the traces of the righteousness of Jehovah, in the rise and fall of empires, in the changes of their political relations, in public prosperity or adversity, in the infliction of barrenness on one part of the earth, or in the gift of fertility to another.² Yet if those traces are hidden, it is enough for him to remember that God, who sets up one, and puts down another, and disposes of all the nations of the earth as he pleases, is a Being of infinite wisdom and goodness, and doeth all things well.

There are however three points, in the order of Providence, which are peculiarly calculated to excite our gratitude. The *first* is the long-suffering and *sparing*

² How remarkably is the retributive justice of Providence displayed in that curse of barrenness and exhaustion, which so often overtakes those countries where the labourers are slaves; and in the comparative fertility and prosperity of other lands, where labour is free! The comparison of the free and slave-holding states of North America is, in this point of view, peculiarly instructive. “What was the cause of these abundant harvests?” (asks Pliny, speaking of the early periods of the republic of Rome)—“It is that, at that time men of consular dignity devoted themselves to the cultivation of their fields; which are now abandoned to wretches, loaded with chains, and bearing on their forehead the brand of their degraded condition.”—*Hodson’s Letter to Say on Free-labour*, page 5.

mercy, so often and so largely extended to the guilty races of men. How often has the march of the invader been prevented—or the pestilence stayed in its course—or the threat of famine permitted to subside—for the benefits of nations deeply involved in guilt, that there might yet be space given them for repentance towards God! The *second* is the gradual yet certain advance in the world, of civilization and useful knowledge; an advance which affords a wondrous play to the faculties of mankind, and multiplies our comforts and enjoyments on every side. The *third* and principal, is the marked subserviency of events, to the diffusion of divine truth—to “the furtherance of the gospel” of our Lord Jesus Christ. By the obvious tendency of many things now passing in the world, as well as by the words of prophecy, the Christian is encouraged to look forward with hope to an approaching day, when peace and righteousness shall abound in a far greater degree than at present—when “they shall no longer hurt nor destroy” in all the Lord’s “holy mountain.”

But the goodness of an ever-present, ever-ruling God, is joyfully traced by the *believer*, in little circumstances, as well as in great events. How often, during the course of our pilgrimage, have we reason to bless him for that especial providence, by which our sufferings are alleviated, and our wants supplied! How many are the minute turning points in our lives—the mere accidents as some persons would call them—which are afterwards found to have been fraught with important consequences both for our temporal and spiritual welfare!

“Oh! who shall say how great the plan
Which this day’s incident began?
Too small, perhaps, the slight occasion,
For our dim-sighted observation;
It passed unnoticed as the bird
That cleaves the liquid air unheard,
And yet may prove, when understood,
The harbinger of endless good.”

COWPER.

In the texture of every man’s history there may be said to be a *warp* and a *woof*. There is the ordinary course of our experience, belonging to our condition and calling in life, regulated by known laws, natural and moral, and capable, to a great extent, of being calculated beforehand. This is the warp. There are also a multitude of incidental events which, like the woof, or cross threads of the weaver, bear *laterally* upon us, and arise out of endless and ever-varied trains of causes, of which we know almost nothing—originating, it may be, in some idle word or thoughtless action, of some unknown person, whose mortal existence has been closed for centuries. Yet these apparently stray circumstances often intersect our path, just at such a time, and just in such a manner, as enable them to serve the most beneficial purposes. How perfect must be the skill and wisdom of that omniscient Being who wields this infinitely intricate machinery, often inclines its forces in answer to prayer, and never fails to apply them to the highest advantage of his believing and obedient children!³ “Whoso is wise, and will *observe* these things, even they shall understand the *loving-kindness* of the Lord.”⁴

³ See *Natural History of Enthusiasm—on Providence*.

⁴ Psa. cvii, 43.

Nor can Christians forget, that the roughest discipline to which they are here subjected, is ordained in mercy for their highest good—"Whom the Lord *loveth* he chasteneth." They are taught of him to welcome sorrow as the means of their purification; and they are not left to suffer from it without support; the Comforter is with them; the celestial city is in their view, and the sunshine of Christianity illuminates their darkest hours. Religion alone can enable us to "count it all joy" when we fall into divers temptations, (i. e. afflictions.)⁵ "We glory in tribulations also," said a much afflicted apostle; "knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope."⁶

But the spiritual use of affliction is by no means confined to the further purification of *believers*. Often is it made the means of arresting the *wanderer* in his course, and of reminding him, like the prodigal in the parable, of his Father's house. Many a child of God can say with David, "Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now have I kept thy word."⁷ Many a careless sinner, under the softening touch of sickness or sorrow, has given way to the influence of divine grace; has been broken down into penitence; and has at length found refuge and peace, at the feet of Jesus.⁸

⁵ James i, 2.⁶ Rom. v, 3—5.⁷ Ps. cxix, 67.⁸ At the feet of Jesus only, can our sorrows be converted into joy.

" 'Tis joy enough, my all in all,
At thy dear feet to lie;
Thou wilt not let me lower fall,
And none can higher fly."

COWPER.

The sinfulness of mankind, from which all our sorrows spring, is itself the Christian's greatest sorrow. Resigned as he is to the hidden purposes of God in permitting its existence, he can often say with Jeremiah, "For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me. Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered? Oh! that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!"⁹ Yet even the wickedness of the world in which we live, is overruled to the advantage of the children of God; for, by their resistance, through divine aid, of the temptations to which that wickedness exposes them, their souls are strengthened in *virtue*, and are gradually prepared for eternal purity. So also their *faith* is disciplined and put to the proof, by the darkness and infidelity which surround them, and comes forth the brighter and stronger for the trial.

Thus it appears, that, in contemplating God in his providence, the Christian discovers innumerable reasons for loving that gracious Being *who first loved us*; but, if we would rightly love the Creator and Moral Governor of the world, we must not fix our attention on his benevolence, as an insulated attribute. The love which would be excited in the rational objects of his bounty, by the kindness of an *unholy being*, could never be of that pure and exalted character, which Christianity claims for *our love to God*. In order

⁹ Jer. viii. 21, 22; ix, 1.

to the production of this noble affection, in its genuine strength and purity, the benevolence of God, and his love towards ourselves, must ever be regarded in connexion with his *holiness*. What a blessing is it then, that, even in his perceptible government over the world, God proclaims himself, by a multitude of indications, to be on the side of virtue! What a blessing, that his holiness is established beyond the possibility of a doubt, by that intuitive rule of right, which, in characters more or less legible, he has condescended to write, by his Spirit, on the hearts of all men!

It is in the Holy Scriptures, however, that the theology of nature is *cleared* and *confirmed*. There the Creator and Ruler of the universe is presented to our view in the true majesty of his character, and his attributes, both natural and moral, are developed in amazing splendour; they are also described in their individual distinctness, as well as in their union—as blended, but not confused. Let us, then, under the guidance of prophets and apostles, learn to contemplate God as our Father—a Spirit, eternal, omnipotent, all-wise, omnipresent, the searcher of all hearts, just, true, faithful, merciful, and holy; let us remember that he is love! Then, surely, if our own dispositions be but rectified by his grace, we shall not fail to love Him, who is *infinitely lovely*; we shall adore him in all his glorious perfections. Our love for God will not only be strong, but reverential; not only ardent, but pure.

SECTION III.

ON THE CONTEMPLATION OF GOD, IN REDEMPTION.—
THE FATHER.

STILL more completely than the provisions of nature fall in with our bodily state, and supply our temporal wants—still more properly than the air agrees with the functions of the lungs, and the light with those of the eye—does the gospel of our Redeemer *suit* the spiritual condition of man. We are a fallen race, alienated from God by our sins, justly liable to his wrath; in the gospel we have pardon, peace, and restoration. “Christ made all things new,” says Grotius, “and the latter creation is *more divine* than the former.”¹ If, then, the first creation of mankind, and all the bounties of nature, are the result of love, that attribute is far more gloriously displayed in the scheme of *redemption*, and in the work of *grace*.

In the development of this plan of mercy, God has been pleased to make himself manifest to us in the mysterious union and distinction of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Do we desire that divine love should burn brightly within us? Then let us fix our souls on the amazing scene—let us *contem-*

¹ *Com.* on Eph. iii, 9.

plate the love of the Father, the love of the Son, and the love of the Spirit !²

The love of GOD the FATHER is ever represented in Scripture as the origin of all our hopes—as the eternal, unfathomable, spring of the waters of life and salvation; and this love is plainly described as extending to the *whole world*. “God so loved *the world*, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”³ God was in Christ, reconciling *the world* unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.”⁴ “God would have *all men* to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of his truth.”⁵ —“Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else.”⁶

Do we inquire for an overwhelming evidence of the love of God? Let the apostle satisfy our inquiry, —“In this was manifested the love of God towards

² The following lines are said to have been written by a person commonly esteemed an *absolute idiot*. A ray from the sanctuary, revealing the mercies of redemption, as well as of creation, must surely have gleamed across his darkness :—

Could we with ink the ocean fill,
Were the whole earth of parchment made,
Were every single stick a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade;
To write the love of God above,
Would drain the ocean dry,
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretch'd from sky to sky.

³ John iii, 16.

⁴ 2 Cor. v, 19.

⁵ 1 Tim. ii, 4.

⁶ Isa. xlv, 22.

us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”⁷ Do we ask, whether God thus loved the whole, or only part, of mankind? Let the same apostle answer, —“If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the *whole world*.”⁸ He tasted “death for *every man*;”⁹ he “gave himself a ransom *for all*.”¹

“If through the offence of one [the] many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto [the] many.”² Even the Gentiles, who were without the benefit of an outward revelation, were by no means destitute of an inward knowledge of the law of God; and some of them showed “*the work of the law written in their hearts*—their conscience also bearing witness.”³ Christ is “the true light which lighteth *every man that cometh into the world*.”⁴ Hence we may reasonably infer, that, as God appointed the death of Christ to be a sacrifice for the sins of the *whole world*, so all men receive, *through Christ*, a measure of moral and spiritual light, and all have their day of gracious visitation. If the light, in

⁷ 1 John iv, 9, 10.⁸ 1 John ii, 1, 2.⁹ Heb. ii, 9¹ 1 Tim. ii, 6.² Rom. v, 15. *οἱ πολλοί*—*τοὺς πολλοὺς*. These expressions appear to mean the whole multitude of mankind.³ Rom. ii, 15.⁴ John i, 9.

numberless instances, is extremely faint—if the darkness fails to comprehend it—we may rest in the conviction, that God is not only just but equitable; and that those who know not their Master's will and do it not, “shall be beaten with *few stripes*.”⁵ In the mean time, the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, as it is revealed in the Holy Scriptures, is intended for the benefit of the whole world. It is adapted to men of every condition, clime, and character; all are invited to avail themselves of its benefits; all who *will* come, *may* come, “and take the water of life freely.”⁶

In contemplating the redeeming mercy of God our Father, it is of peculiar importance that we should keep in view its “*breadth and length*,” as well as its “*depth and height*.”⁷ Great will be our own loss, if we are found ascribing unauthorised limits to the liberality of our God—to the various modifications, and incomprehensible scope, of his love in Christ Jesus. Who, indeed, shall dare to assert, that the love which induced the Creator of the universe to send his Son into the world to die on the cross, does not extend to an infinite number of rational beings, beyond the boundaries of this narrow sphere? Who

⁵ Luke xii, 48.

⁶ Rev. xxii, 17.

⁶ “Plenteous grace with thee is found,

Grace to pardon every sin;

Let the healing streams abound,

Make and keep me pure within;

Thou of life the Fountain art,

Freely let me take of thee,

Spring thou up within my heart,

Rise to all eternity.”

WESLEY.

⁷ Eph. iii, 18.

shall deny that it was his gracious purpose—for reasons, and on principles unknown to us—to reconcile unto himself, by the blood of Jesus, “things in heaven,” as well as “things in earth”⁸—yea, to “gather together in one, *all things* in Christ?”⁹

While, however, we embrace these large views of the love of God in Christ Jesus, we have abundant reason to thank our Heavenly Father for those *especial* mercies, of which *Christians* are the objects! Jesus is himself the elect of God¹—the corner-stone of his church, *elect*, precious²—and all who truly believe in him as their Saviour, are *elect in him*, “according to the foreknowledge of God” our Father.³ They are “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people.”⁴ The love of God, which has flowed towards them, from all eternity, in a channel of unrivalled depth, is now “shed abroad” in their “hearts”—a blessed evidence of their present acceptance, and of their future glory.⁵ To them, with an emphasis far exceeding the claims of ancient Israel, may be applied the solemn words of Jehovah—“I have loved thee with an *everlasting love*; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.”⁶

The cords by which the Father draws us to the Son,⁷ are cords of *love*. No man, whose “fallow ground” is broken up, and who has truly come in faith, to Christ as his Saviour, will refuse to acknowledge that his conversion is of grace alone, a result of the compassion and beneficence of God, effected by his

⁸ Col. i, 20.⁹ Eph. i, 10.¹ Isa. xlii, 1.² 1 Pet. ii, 6.³ 1 Pet. i, 2.⁴ 1 Pet. ii, 9.⁵ Rom. v, 4.⁶ Jer. xxxi, 3.⁷ John vi, 44.

Holy Spirit. “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but *according to his mercy*, he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by *his grace*, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”⁸ “Behold what manner of *love* the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.”⁹ Thus can the believer in Jesus say with Hezekiah—“Thou hast *in love to my soul* delivered it from the pit of corruption; for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.”¹

The claims of our Heavenly Father on the gratitude of mankind, are immensely enhanced by a single consideration—that his love and favour are bestowed on those, who are not only utterly destitute of merit, but are condemned to death, as transgressors, by the righteous sentence of his law. He sent his Son into the world to save *sinners*; and every sinner who repents and believes, is a brand plucked by a hand of infinite compassion, from everlasting burnings.² “God commendeth his love to us, in that, while *we were yet sinners*, Christ died for us.”³ “God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even *when we were dead in sins*, hath quickened us together with Christ.”⁴

The sinfulness of man is indeed the ground on which the love of God towards us assumes the peculiar character of *mercy*—“I will be *merciful* to their

⁸ Tit. iii, 5—7.

⁹ 1 John iii, 1.

¹ Isa. xxxviii, 17; *comp.* Ps. cxvi, 1—8.

² Zech. iii, 2.

³ Rom. v, 8.

⁴ Eph. ii, 4, 5.

unrighteousness, saith the Lord, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.”⁵ Mercy is more than simple benevolence; it is kindness bestowed on persons who deserve punishment and are involved in distress. Behold yon wretched criminal, about to be led to execution, and trembling in the view of the scaffold—the royal pardon arrives, and in a moment he is free! This is *mercy*; and just the same in its nature, though infinitely higher in its import and degree, is the mercy of God in Christ Jesus.

All who repent of their sins, turn away from their iniquities, and believe in Jesus, are the objects of this mercy. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to them; they “are justified by faith, without the deeds of the law;”⁶ and being reconciled unto God, through the blood of the covenant, they are now the objects of his unfailing love. Walking in the light of his truth, and proving their faith by their obedience, they enjoy a blessed communion with the Father of Spirits; and, so long as they continue in a state of watchful dependence upon him, nothing can deprive them of his favour and protection. “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee; behold I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.”⁷ “If a man love me,” said Jesus, “he will keep my words; *and my Father will love him*, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.”⁸ And again in his prayer for his disciples—

⁵ Heb. viii, 12; *comp.* Jer. xxxi, 34; Luke i, 77, 78, &c.

⁶ Rom. iii, 28.

⁷ Isa. xlix, 15, 16.

⁸ John xiv, 23.

“that the world may know that thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me that the *love wherewith thou hast loved me*, may be in them, and I in them.”⁹

Since the love of the Father towards the Son is here represented as the *standard* of his love towards all who follow Jesus, we cannot marvel at the apostle Paul’s persuasion—“that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”¹

While the love of God towards his believing and obedient children is abundantly manifested by his protecting care, and by all the rich provisions of his bounty—none of these benefits is worthy of being compared with inward and spiritual *grace*. By his grace he brings the soul into greater and greater degrees of purity, and thus prepares it for a final union with himself; and although it may often be administered through the channel of sorrow and suffering, the Christian can acknowledge that all is *tender mercy* still!

Finally, this “darling attribute” of our Heavenly Father, as Bishop Horne emphatically calls it,² is carried forth into its fulness—like a river into its ocean—when the present scene of conflict is exchanged for a blessed eternity. “Whom he justified, them he also *glorified*.”³ “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively

⁹ John xvii, 23—26.

¹ Rom. viii, 38, 39.

² *Com.* on Ps. xxii.

³ Rom. viii, 40.

hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an *inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away*; reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation.”⁴ Everlasting life is the glorious result of the whole process of mercy.—“They shall be mine saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my *special treasure*;⁵ and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him!”

Now whether we contemplate the love of God our Father, in the free offers of salvation made to the whole world; or in the election of his universal church according to foreknowledge; or in the effectual working of his grace for the conversion of sinners; or in their justification by faith; or in the riches of his favour towards them when justified; or in the work of sanctification; or in the final glory and happiness of the saints—the grand evidences, and only adequate measure, of his love, is the gift of his ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON.

That all the blessings bestowed on mankind, both temporal and spiritual, flow through the medium of the eternal Word, by whom God made the worlds, will probably be allowed by all who accept the Scriptures as divine; but this doctrine applies, with peculiar force, to the privileges and hopes of Christian believers. In him, and in him alone, they are chosen, accepted, pardoned, cleansed, and finally glorified; in him they are the objects of unutterable love, and the receivers of countless benefits—light, wisdom, know-

⁴ 1 Pet. i, 3—5.⁵ Mal. iii, 17, in margin; Heb. סֵפֶלָה

ledge, purity, patience, comfort in affliction, joy in the Holy Ghost, and safety both temporal and eternal. “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also, freely give us *all things*?”⁶

In order to form some conception of our Heavenly Father’s love, and of the incomprehensible depth and height of this its only measure, we must accustom ourselves to reflect on the glory and virtue of the Son, who dwelt from everlasting in the Father’s bosom;⁷ on the infinite strength of that love wherewith the Father loved him before the foundation of the world⁸—when he “was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him;”⁹ on the reciprocity which subsists between them, seeing that all things which the Son hath are the Father’s, and all things which the Father hath are the Son’s;¹ on their perfect union in counsel, in affection, in power, and in nature²—in short, on the plain doctrine of Scripture, that, with the Holy Spirit, they are ONE GOD. Thus, and thus only, can our minds be raised to any adequate estimate of that compassion towards our fallen race, which dictated the awful decree, “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my MY FELLOW, saith the LORD OF HOSTS.”³

While the connexion subsisting between the Father and the Son, is unspeakably near and glorious—far beyond the limits of our knowledge and experience—

⁶ Rom. viii, 32.

⁷ John i, 18.

⁸ John xvii, 24.

⁹ Prov. viii, 30.

¹ John xvi, 15; xvii, 10; *comp.* Matt. xi, 27.

² John x, 27—30; xiv, 9.

³ Zech. xiii, 7.

the language of Scripture *invites* our illustrating the subject, by depicting to ourselves the fellowship of a human father, with his beloved and only son. Call to mind the intimacy and pleasantness of this peculiar relation; consider how its delights are increased just in the degree in which both parent and child abound in virtue; imagine the willing obedience and ever-springing love of the child on the one hand, and the cherishing affection of the father on the other; and then conceive, that for the restoration and welfare of some unhappy race of rebels, such a father gives up such a son, as a voluntary sufferer, *unto death*.

The compassion towards that guilty community which could prompt such a surrender on the part of their prince, must be of a deep and ardent character indeed. Should it however appear that this sacrifice was a divinely appointed means, and the only conceivable one, of reconciling mercy with justice, and of establishing the inviolable sanctity of the law of righteousness throughout his dominions, the whole event would exhibit such a union of forgiveness and purity, as would claim not only the fervent love, but the profound respect, of the pardoned multitude. Their grateful sense of the mercy of their king, could not fail to be mingled with an awful abhorrence of their crime, and of themselves as criminals.

Such precisely is the practical result of the scheme of redemption. By appointing the Son of his bosom, the partner of his glory, to take our nature upon him, and to die on the cross, as an atonement for guilty man, God has not only “declared” his mercy, but his “*righteousness*, for the forgiveness of sins that are

past.”⁴ While he freely justifies the believer in Jesus, he maintains his own justice inviolate, and suffers not the abstraction even of one jot or tittle from the demands of his holy law. In the dispensation of the gospel, the mercy of God is indeed gloriously displayed. But, at the same time, a seal of the most sublime and authoritative character is stamped on the righteousness of the law ; on the sinfulness of sin ; on the indispensable necessity of virtue ; on the spotless purity of heavenly things. When, therefore, we contemplate God our Father, in the redemption of the world—if the Spirit bless our meditations—the affection excited in our hearts will be that of love *tempered with awe* ; our gratitude will flow in a stream at once deep and undefiled ; and while we rejoice in his compassions, we shall listen to his high behest—“ Be ye holy, for I AM HOLY.”

There is nothing by which the religion of the Bible is more remarkably distinguished, from every system of man’s invention, than by the first and great commandment of the law—“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.”⁵ Here is the first of all moral obligations, and the foundation of all right practice. Now if this commandment was sustained under the legal dispensation—if even the ancient Israelite knew enough of the mercies of God to be furnished with motives to obey it—with what prodigious force must it press on the mind of the Christian believer ! Those who know that they are indebted to the Father for

⁴ Rom. iii, 25, 26.

⁵ Deut. vi, 5.

the unspeakable gift of his only-begotten Son, may well feel themselves constrained to love him, with all their heart, and soul, and might. No divided affections can possibly meet his claims upon their gratitude. Won and subdued by the strength and tenderness of his compassion, they must desire nothing, but to be *his* entirely, and *his* for ever.

But, in loving God, we must love him as he is—a Being of infinite purity and righteousness. His moral attributes must all be dear to us; and we must not only love *him*, but love *his law*, which is at once the rule of our lives, and the transcript of *his* character. A hatred of sin, and an ardent desire after holiness, must ever mark the disposition and conduct of the Lord's children. If David could say—"Oh how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day; thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart"⁶—the follower of Jesus, in every age, ought surely to breathe in the same spirit, and to burn with the same ardour. If the ancient Israelites were commanded to talk of the Lord's precepts when they sat in their houses, or walked by the way, and when they lay down, and when they rose up; to teach them diligently to their children; to bind them for a sign upon their hand, and for frontlets between their eyes; to write them on their door-posts and on their gates⁷—much more is the Christian bound, by every tie of gratitude, to love and obey them—to guard and cherish them as his dearest treasure.

⁶ Ps. cxix, 97, 111.

⁷ Deut. vi, 6, 7.

Finally, if, under a humbling sense of his mercy, we truly love God and love his law, we shall heartily endeavour to promote his glory. Our rejoicing will be in remembrance of his infinite blessedness; while it will be our highest happiness to exalt his holy name —“to administer to the display of his goodness and greatness.”⁸ The supreme object of our ardent and disinterested affection, *He* will be our *end* in all things!

⁸ “The true servants of God feel that the best end of their being is fulfilled, if they administer to the display of the divine goodness and greatness; and that it is the grand office and privilege of creatures to exalt their all-perfect Creator and Father, and to experience an entire annihilation of themselves, in the contemplation of his excellencies, and the desire of promoting his honour and praise.”—*Love to God Considered*, by James Joyce, 3rd edition, p. 60.

SECTION IV.

ON THE CONTEMPLATION OF GOD, IN REDEMPTION.—
THE SON.

“MY heart is inditing a good matter : I speak of the things which I have made touching the king ; my tongue is the pen of a ready writer. Thou art fairer than the children of men ; grace is poured into thy lips ; therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.”¹ Such were the glowing words poured forth by the psalmist, when his harp was tuned to the praises of Emmanuel. The love of Christ is indeed an animating subject, full of joy and sublimity ; and to dwell on its principal features, under the guidance of Scripture, must be regarded as one of our happiest privileges. When such are our reflexions, we may well say with David —“In the multitude of my thoughts within me, *thy comforts* delight my soul.”²

1. In the first place, the Christian ought ever to keep in mind, that the Son of God was not the unwilling victim of the righteousness of the law, but a cooperator with the Father, in the scheme of justice and mercy. His humiliation and sufferings, although undergone in obedience to his Father’s command, were

¹ Ps. xlv, 1, 2.

² Ps. xciv, 19.

also voluntary as it regarded himself; and in the Holy Scriptures, they are ascribed indifferently to the Father's love, and to *his own*. "Hereby perceive we the love (*of Christ*,³) because he laid down his life for us."⁴ "*As the Father hath loved me*, so have I loved you . . . greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."⁵ "Christ also hath *loved us*, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour."⁶ "Christ also *loved the church*, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself, a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."⁷ "Unto Him that *loved us* and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever."⁸ "Let this *mind* be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but *made himself* of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."⁹ Great as is the happiness of knowing the love of Christ, we must freely confess with the apostle, that it "*passeth knowledge*."

³ Not "of God," as in the English version.

⁴ 1 John, iii, 16.

⁵ John xv, 9, 13.

⁶ Eph. v, 2.

⁷ Eph. v, 25—27.

⁸ Rev. i, 5, 6; *comp.* Gal. ii, 20.

⁹ Phil. ii, 5—8.

2. In order, however, to form some proper conception of it, let us contemplate that original glory and blessedness which the Son of God surrendered, for our sakes, when he came into the world, and was made “a little lower than the angels.” “And now, O Father,” said Jesus in his prayer, “glorify thou me with thine own self with *the glory which I had with thee before the world was.*”¹ The glory which the Son enjoyed with the Father before the world was, was the glory of God himself. He was in “the form of God,” subsisting in the nature of the Deity, and arrayed in his characteristic attributes—“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”² “By him,” also, “all things were made, and without him was not any thing made that was made.”³

Thus he “thought it not robbery to be equal with God,”—that is, to be an equal object with him, of honour and adoration. For him, as well as for the Father, ascended the anthems of the new creation. Before them both, in the unity of the Godhead, arose perpetually from the angelic host, the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and the incense of praise. Such was the glory—such the infinite majesty—from which the Son of God *reduced himself*,⁴ when he veiled his deity in manhood.

But the condition of our blessed Redeemer, before his incarnation, was one not only of divine majesty, but of perfect *bliss*. He was “with God,”—incon-

¹ John xvii, 5.² John i, 1.³ John i, 3.⁴ Phil, ii, 7. ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσε—“reduced, or emptied himself.”

ceivably near to the fountain of all happiness, dwelling in the Father's bosom, the object of his unbounded love; "rejoicing always before him;" partaking, without limits, of the river of his pleasures. Yet from these unutterable joys he *abstained* for our benefit, and became "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."

3. "Great is the mystery of godliness,—God was manifest *in the flesh*."⁵ That he who is one in essence with the Father—himself, therefore, *Jehovah*, the Creator and Sovereign of the universe—should take upon him "the seed of Abraham," and the nature of man; that he should become the brother of his people, and be made, *in all points*, like unto his brethren, sin only excepted; that he should subject himself, in a human body and soul, to the limits and infirmities of our species—to the weakness of man's birth, and to the painfulness of his death—is an example of condescension and unbounded charity, which the mind of man may contemplate with silent adoration, but can never fully grasp. The act of self-renunciation would have been infinite, even had he come, as the Jews expected him, in the form of an earthly monarch. But, behold, he selects for himself a humble station, and a life of poverty. His birth-place is a stable; his cradle a manger; his early home a Galilean village; his mother a virgin, royally descended indeed, but of a low estate; his reputed father, a meehanie. Soon he becomes a wanderer in deserts and eaves of the earth; and "though the foxes

⁵ 1 Tim. iii, 16.

have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.”⁶

When his followers would make him a king, he finds his refuge in the wilderness; he prefers the form of a servant; he ministers to his brethren; he washes his disciples’ feet. In the mean time, an ungodly people refuse to believe his word; his miraeles are traced to Beelzebub; he is despised and rejected—the object of unbridled hatred, insult, and mockery. He gives his back “to the smiters,” and his cheeks to them that “pluck off the hair;” he hides not his face “from shame and spitting.”⁷ Finally, the shameless cry is raised against him—“Crucify him! crucify him!” Having made himself of no reputation, he humbles himself yet further—even “unto death;” and the death to which he submits, is a public execution, in the form which was appointed for the vilest malefactors.

4. Such were the depths of humiliation to which he descended; but who shall tell the sufferings which he endured? Persons of great refinement of mind are often found to be peculiarly susceptible of pain, even in body; and it is impossible to say in how great a degree the most endowed and refined of all human spirits, was alive to the sufferings of its mortal tabernacle. “His visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men.”⁸ There can be no question that our blessed Lord suffered grievously from weariness, watching, and fasting; from the scourge so wantonly inflicted before his

⁶ Matt. viii, 20.

⁷ Isa. i, 6.

⁸ Isa. lii, 14.

crucifixion; from burning thirst upon the cross, when his cruel enemies gave him “gall mingled with vinegar” to drink; from the piercing of his hands and feet; from the slow yet intense agonies of his dying hours, while the whole weight of his body was resting on those tortured parts. The thought of these things, and of each particular amongst them, ought to move every heart to tenderness; for he was “wounded for *our* transgressions”—by “his stripes *we* are healed.” “I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of supplications, (saith the Lord,) and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.”⁹ Yet the marring of our Lord’s countenance might doubtless be traced chiefly to the sorrows of his *soul*. “My *soul*,” said he, “is exceeding sorrowful, *even unto death*.”¹

The capacities of man for every description of right feeling are miserably weakened by the fall; and it is only as we experience a restoration to the image of our God, that they again assume their native and original vigour. On this principle it is in various respects true, that holiness and *sensibility to sorrow* go hand in hand and keep pace with each other. The greater advances we make towards divine purity, the more acute becomes our sympathy with the woes of other men, the deeper our distress because of the sinfulness of the world, and the more painful to our

⁹ Zech. xii, 10.

¹ Matt. xxvi, 30.

feelings those temptations of the devil, with which we are ourselves assailed.

Now we know that our blessed Lord, although clothed in the nature of man, was absolutely free from the moral taint of the fall; in him there was no selfishness—no spot or stain of sin, in word or deed, in thought or imagination. How unspeakably tender and acute, therefore, must have been his sympathy with an afflicted generation, when he bare the “sicknesses” and carried the “sorrows” of the people; when he wept over the grave of Lazarus, and mourned the impending fate of Jerusalem! What frequent horror and conflict of mind must have been his lot, while he continued in personal contact with a world of traitors and sinners! What grief and anxiety must have assailed him, when, in the view of the vice and irreligion of his countrymen, he could say, “the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up!” and again, “O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, how long shall I suffer you!”

Above all, however, the sorrow of his soul must have been strange and peculiar indeed, during those forty days and nights of fasting and solitude, when he was himself exposed to the insidious assaults of Satan. That He, in whom there was no sin, should thus become liable to temptation—that the prince of darkness should be permitted to come in upon him like a flood—that Satan should dare to suggest to that holy incarnate One, the undue indulgence of appetite, the gratification of worldly ambition, and the sin of presumption towards God—is a mystery which no man can unravel. But one point in connexion

with it is abundantly clear ; namely, that the anguish of spirit produced by these temptations in the mind of Jesus, must have been in exact proportion to his hatred of sin—on a perfect level with his immaculate purity.

It is an instructive circumstance, that the sufferings which Jesus underwent during the course of his life and ministry, were endured with *long-continued patience*. Aggravated as they were by a perfectly defined anticipation of yet deeper woe, he refrained from exerting his power for his own deliverance, and even from rushing into the arms of his enemies ; he quietly awaited his appointed hour.

At length, however, that hour arrived. Let us then follow him to the garden of Gethsemane, and mark his agony and bloody sweat, when he poured forth his soul, with “strong crying and tears,” unto God ; let us listen to his prayer, “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me ;” and again, “If this cup may not pass from me except I drink it, thy will be done ;”² let us view him with our mind’s eye, betrayed by his familiar friend, a prey to his malicious foes, bending under the weight of his cross, borne along by the multitude to Calvary, nailed to the fatal tree ; let us observe the veil of darkness which overspread the face of nature, and hear his piercing cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?” let us call to mind, that in that hour of unutterable desertion, the righteous vengeance of God, against a guilty world, was poured forth upon the innocent substitute—that he

² Matt, xxvi, 39, 42.

was then bearing upon himself the inconceivable burden of the sins of all men. Thus only shall we appreciate, with any degree of exactness, the sufferings of the Lamb of God. Well might the rocks be torn asunder, and the veil of the temple be rent from top to bottom; well might the bodies of the saints, which slept, awake from death's slumber, at the moment which closed these solemn hours of darkness and woe—when he said, "It is finished," and "bowed his head, and gave up the ghost."³

5. The contrast which we have now been considering, affords us a *measure*, by which we may estimate the greatness of redeeming mercy. Let our thoughts *ascend* to the original majesty and blessedness of Christ; let them go down to the opposite extreme of his humiliation and suffering; let us connect and compare the two states; let us add the unfathomable depth to the glorious elevation—and we shall not be left without some just apprehensions of that amazing love, which brought Emmanuel from his throne, to live and die for sinners.

³ John xix, 30.

³ "There are in all the sufferings of the Son of God, and particularly in his inward tribulations, peculiarities and excellencies that no other sufferings can or should pretend to. The dignity of the person that suffered did stamp an infinite value on them; and the vastness, or rather immensity of his love to God, and charity to man in suffering, gave such degrees of sensibility to his sufferings, that nothing can reach or fathom, but a love as boundless as his own. And the more that any measures of this love take possession of the heart, so proportionably the more just and clear will one's apprehensions of the sufferings of the Lamb of God be."—*Just Measures of the Pious Institutions of Youth*, by George Munro, vicar of Letterkenny, Ireland, vol. ii, p. 295.

Now in the effects produced by this dispensation of mercy on all who accept it in faith, we shall find another contrast of a similar character, but in the reverse order, which may serve to prove, that as his love towards us is infinite, so our gratitude towards him *ought* to know no bounds. What are the evils from which Christians are delivered by their incarnate Lord? The power of darkness; the tyranny of Satan; the disease of sin; the curse of the law; the worm that dieth not; the fire which never shall be quenched; a life of iniquity and wretchedness; an eternity of woe. On the other hand, what are the gifts which he graciously confers upon them? The light of divine truth; the pardon of all their sins; the abounding influences of the Holy Spirit; “the peace of God which passeth all understanding;” and, to crown all, an immortality of joy. “Ye are not come to the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire; nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest but ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect; and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel.”⁴

If such are the dangers and woes from which we are saved, and such the blessings with which we are invested, through the incarnation and sufferings of the

⁴ Heb. xii, 18, 22—24.

Son of God, how can we hesitate to surrender *all* our faculties to the service of our Redeemer? “The love of Christ constraineth us ; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead ; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.”⁵

6. It is a remarkable instance of the enigmatical character of prophecy, that, in immediate connexion with his prediction of the propitiatory *death* of the Messiah, Isaiah speaks of *his prolonging his days*.—“When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.”⁶

But the prophecy has been fully explained by the event ; and now the atoning sacrifice and *resurrection* of Christ are coupled in the view of every Christian, never again to be severed.

The resurrection of our Lord is our proper evidence that his death was not in vain—that his victory over the “last enemy” of man, and over sin, hell, and Satan, is already won ; and that now all who believe in him, as the sacrifice of their sins, may also rely upon him as their living, unchanging, Saviour ; “for if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.”⁷

Here, indeed, we open another ample page in the history of the love of Christ. Jesus having paid, on the cross, the appointed price for the souls of his

⁵ 2 Cor. v, 14, 15.

⁶ Isa. liii, 10.

⁷ Rom. v, 10.

people, and having again set down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, is described as taking possession of his church, as a bridegroom of his bride ; and henceforth, with an ardour and strength beyond all human conception, he loves her as HIS OWN. *Submissive* love on her part, and *protecting* love on *his*, distinguish their blessed relationship. Having imputed to her his own righteousness, and sanctified her by his Spirit, he can now address her in the endearing language—"Thou art all fair, my love ; there is no spot in thee thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse."⁸ Well may the church reply—"Set me as a seal upon thy heart ; as a seal upon thine arm ; for love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave ; the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it ; if a man would give all the substance of his house for *love*, it would utterly be condemned !" ⁹

7. "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife, loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, *even as the Lord the church* ; for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."¹ It is evident that Paul is here dwelling on his favourite figure, of the *head* and the *body* ; with the obvious understanding, first, that the head is an actual part of the body ; and secondly, that it is its most important part—the source of life and sensation, and the seat of the mind. "Christ," he tells us, "is

⁸ Cant. iv, 7, 9.⁹ Cant. viii, 6, 7.¹ Eph. v, 28, 30.

the head of the body, the church.”² Christians must “grow up into *him*, in all things, which is the *head*, from whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love.”³ The figure, like other figures in Scripture, is simple and familiar; yet it affords an exact illustration of the *love* of the risen and glorified Saviour towards his church universal.

The head is *one* with the body: “by joints and bands it is knit”⁴ to its members, just as they are knit to each other. So Christ is one with the church—himself forming an actual part of that mystical body. Not only does he abide with his disciples in the character of an omnipresent Saviour, cherishing them by his grace, and protecting them by his power; but he brings them individually into connexion and union with himself; he dwells *in* them, and they dwell *in* him.⁵ Nor is their fellowship with the Son alone; *through him* it is with the Father also—“That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in them, that they also may be *one in us* that they may be *one, even as we are one*; I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.”⁶ Who can doubt that the union thus maintained with his church, by her Lord and Redeemer, is in unutterable *love*? “Who shall separate us from the *love of Christ*? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?”

² Col. i, 18.³ Eph. v, 15, 16.⁴ Col. ii, 19.⁵ John vi, 56; 1 John iii, 24.⁶ John xvii, 21—23.

“Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.”⁷

From the head sensation is diffused over the whole body; the instant that any one of our members is severed from this source of life and feeling, it becomes insensible and dies. Thus the Christian derives all his spiritual life from his union with Christ; and except we “hold the head”⁸ by faith, there can be no life in us—we are still “*dead* in trespasses and sin.”⁹ Nor will a mere intellectual belief in Jesus as our Saviour serve this all-important purpose, any more than juxtaposition would give life to a limb which belongs not to the body. There must be that heart-felt reliance on Christ, which animates the affections, and works by love. Then will our Holy Head be a perpetual source to us of vital energy. We shall be alive unto God and holiness in this present world; and, being joined by indissoluble bonds, to the Prince of immortality, we shall live *with him* for ever.

The next point to union and life is *fellow feeling*. So long as they maintain a healthy connexion with the head, all the members of the body are tenderly alive to each other’s feelings. But the centre of this sympathy is in the head itself; and not the smallest muscle, vessel, or nerve, in any one of our limbs, is in any degree affected, but the sensorium *there*, responds and vibrates to the affection. Thus Christians, while they individually derive their life from Christ, their head, suffer and rejoice in sympathy with each other. But Christ himself is the very source of these

⁷ Rom. viii, 35, 37.

⁸ Col. ii, 19.

⁹ Eph. ii, 1.

mutual feelings, and his own sympathy towards us is infinitely more acute, tender, and effective, than that of our nearest Christian brethren. Having himself experienced unutterable woe, and passed through the ordeal of manifold temptations, he is always alive to the sorrows and dangers of his people. "In that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."¹ "We have not an High Priest which cannot be *touched with the feeling of our infirmities* : but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."²

Nor is the sympathy of our divine Redeemer with his church, restricted to her sorrows and temptations; he can also rejoice in her joy—"Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jeruselem. . . . The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love; he will joy over thee with singing."³ In hours of comparative peace and tranquillity, when Christians are permitted to commune with their Lord, and to delight themselves in his presence, the language of the bridegroom is intelligibly heard—"Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig tree putteth forth her green figs; and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away."⁴

¹ Heb. ii, 18.² Heb. iv, 15.³ Zeph. iii, 14, 17.⁴ Cant. ii, 10—13.

We cannot look upon a person engaged in business or conversation, and watch his eye and listen to his words, without perceiving that the head represents the body—sees, hears, thinks, and speaks for the whole man. So Christ undertakes and provides for his people; acts on their behalf; and represents them in the courts of heaven. In the character of a faithful and ever-loving advocate, he appears in the presence of God for us; defends our interests, and pleads our cause. Our enemy and accuser fails to triumph over us only because our almighty friend continually rebukes him. Our prayers are accepted, only because, when they ascend into the presence of God the Father, it is our High Priest who presents them—enveloping them in the sweet incense of his own intercession. “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right-hand of God; who also maketh intercession for us.”⁵ “But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”⁶

Lastly, the head *rules* the body. *There* dwells the immaterial mind, with all its powers of reason; *there* the will is determined; and, in obedience to the will, the various members of the body move and act; nor can they, when in a healthy state, possibly do otherwise. So Christ is the ever-present sovereign and all-wise ruler of his church; his is the master-mind which

⁵ Rom. viii, 34.

⁶ Heb. vii, 24, 25.

pervades and regulates the whole body. By the influence of his Spirit, he guides the movements of all his living members; he conduets them into truth, holiness, and peace; he instructs them by his “anointing” which cannot lie; his will is made manifest to them, not only in the page of Scripture, but in the secret of the heart; and nothing is required on their parts, for the purposes either of safety or duty, but the *obedience of faith*. If their souls are sound in the truth, they *cannot* disobey him.

But the authority of the *mind* is not confined to the body over which it presides; it exercises a kind of dominion over all other things for the body’s sake; it claims surrounding nature as its property, and applies it to the benefit of man. So the Lord Jesus rules supreme, not only over the church, but over the universe, for the church’s sake. He applies to her welfare, present and eternal, resources of infinite depth and fertility, which are all his own. “God hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over ALL THINGS to the church, which is his body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.”⁷

8. The fitness of the risen and glorified Saviour to all the need of his believing children, arises, in a peculiar manner, from the mysterious union in him, of the divine and human natures. With the supremacy and omniscience of deity, he unites all the tenderness of brotherhood; and again, while he is *man* to feel for the temptations of his people, he is *God* to deliver them from all their enemies. The same union will be conspicuously displayed in an awful day to come

⁷ Eph. i, 22, 23.

—when, in the form and character of the “Son of man,” yet with all the majesty of the eternal Godhead, he will come again, to complete the salvation and glory of his followers.

True indeed it is, that, at the solemn hour which terminates their present life, Jesus visits his people individually—“precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.”⁸ In the “valley of the shadow of death” he is their friend and companion; and when they tread the verge of Jordan, they find him like the High Priest of old, who bore the ark of the covenant, standing in the midst of the river, that they may pass through its waves, with safety, to the land of promise. Thus may the humble Christian say with David, “I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness;”⁹ or with Stephen, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;”¹ or with Paul, “To depart and be *with Christ* . . . is far better.”²

“The heir of heaven, henceforth I fear not death;
In Christ I live; in Christ I draw the breath
Of the true life;—Let then earth, sea, and sky,
Make war against me! On my heart I show
Their mighty Master’s seal. In vain they try
To end my life, that can but end its woe.
Is that a death-bed where a Christian lies?
Yes! but not his—’t is Death himself there dies.”

COLERIDGE.

Yet the church is taught to look forward, with hope and confidence, to that still more solemn period, when Jesus “shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty

⁸ Ps. cxvi, 15.

⁹ Ps. xvii, 15.

¹ Acts vii, 56.

² Phil. i, 23.

angels,”—when “he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.”³ This period, according to the record of Scripture, will be distinguished by three events of unspeakable importance—the resurrection of the dead; the destruction, or purification by fire, of the visible world; and the final judgment of all men. Then shall “the wicked be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God;”⁴ but “the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”⁵ Raised in his likeness, or transformed into it, and invested with robes washed white in his blood, the Lord’s children, of every age, name, and nation, shall then behold in their Judge, a Saviour and a Friend. In the view of an assembled universe, he will present them to Himself⁶—he will present them to his Father⁷ a *faultless* church; and in his perfect LOVE they will find their eternity of joy.

It appears, then, that the redeeming love of God—the Son—is manifested, *first*, by his voluntary self-reduction from original glory and bliss, to the lowliness of human nature, and to the sufferings of the cross, that he might atone for the sins of mankind; *secondly*, by his grace towards his people, in bringing them into union with himself, in feeding them with the bread of life, in sympathising with their sorrows and joys, in pleading their cause, in governing them by his Spirit, and in ruling the universe itself for

³ 2 Thess. i, 7, 10.⁴ Ps. ix, 17.⁵ Matt. xiii, 43.⁶ Eph. v, 27.⁷ Jude 24.

their benefit ; and *lastly*, by his bestowing upon them the victory over death, and by his consummating all their bliss, in eternal glory.

In the contemplation of these things, the heart of the Christian, though still prone to coldness and insensibility, can often melt into tenderness, and overflow with love and gratitude. But it is not only because of his beneficence towards ourselves, that we are taught to love the Son of God, but because of his intrinsic amiability—because of the beauty and divine perfection of his character. In humbling himself from his glorious estate, even to the death of the cross, he was one with the Father, not only in a scheme of mercy, but also in upholding the righteousness of the law ; during his life on earth, he displayed, in his conduct as a man, a perfect conformity to the moral attributes of God ; and now that he reigns supreme at the right-hand of the Majesty on high, no man can live in sin and yet claim him as a Saviour ; his kingdom is one of purity as well as peace.

We therefore acknowledge him to be a *righteous* Redeemer, “the Holy One of Israel ;” we depend on his *merits*, as well as on his mercies ; we admire and adore him for his boundless love, and for his eternal *worthiness*. “*Worthy* is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.”—“Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.”⁸

⁸ Rev. v, 12, 13.

SECTION V.

ON THE CONTEMPLATION OF GOD, IN REDEMPTION.—
THE SPIRIT.

WHEN the Lord Jesus was on the point of quitting the sphere of his humiliation, and of returning to the glory of his Father, he gave his last commission to his disciples—"Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the *Holy Ghost*." ¹ Hence we cannot fail to learn, that the Holy Ghost is no mere influence or quality, but an equal object, with the Father and the Son, of the Christian's faith and allegiance. As such, he is frequently alluded to in the New Testament. The source of all true virtue and happiness among men, he claims our perpetual reverence; and to blaspheme against him, is declared to be an unpardonable transgression. "All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewithsoever they shall blaspheme; but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation." ²

The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of Christ ³—He is *sent* of the Father, ⁴ and *sent* of the

¹ Matt. xxvii, 19.

² Mark iii, 28, 29.

³ Rom. viii, 9.

⁴ John xiv, 26.

Son.⁵ Yet it cannot be denied that the authority and dignity which are thus ascribed to him, belong to the Supreme Being himself; and equally clear is it, that God alone can perform the *works* of the Spirit.

To search, illuminate, and cleanse, the soul; to breathe into it the breath of the true life; to inspire the Lord's servants; to distribute, according to his own will, those manifold gifts by which the church is edified—are the peculiar offices of the Spirit; and who shall deny that they are offices of *deity*? “God is a Spirit;” invisible and spiritual in his nature, he fills his own works; he exercises over them an unseen and powerful influence; he dwells and operates in the hearts of men. Nor can we deny the truth of the converse of the proposition—that the Spirit who fills the works of the Creator, who exercises over them an unseen and powerful influence, who dwells and operates in the hearts of men, is *God*. “The LORD is that SPIRIT.”⁶

Since then the Spirit is God, it plainly follows that he is also *love*; for “God is love;” and nothing can be more inseparable from the nature of the Deity, than this pervading attribute. When Paul beseeches his brethren to strive with him in prayer, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for (the sake of) the love of the Spirit, we may best understand him as speaking, not of our love to the Spirit, but of the *Spirit's love to us*.⁷

⁵ John xv, 26.

⁶ 2 Cor. iii, 17. See *Essays on Christianity*, 3rd edition, vii, p. 143.

⁷ Rom. xv, 30. διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν, Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, καὶ διὰ τῆς ἀγάπης τοῦ Πνεύματος.

It was through the agency of the Holy Ghost that the Son of God became incarnate, and was afterwards anointed for all his gracious offices. Immeasurably gifted for his work and station, by the influences of the Spirit, Jesus became both the prophet and the king of his people. “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,” says the Messiah, “because the LORD hath *anointed* me to preach good tidings unto the meek.”⁸ Again, the psalmist, worshipping him, says—“Thy *throne*, O God, is for ever and ever; the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre; thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness; therefore God, thy God, hath *anointed* thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.”⁹ Jesus was also the Christ, i. e. the Anointed-one, in his *priestly* character. The precious ointment which was poured forth upon the head of Aaron, and ran down to the skirts of his garment, was probably a type of that unlimited effusion of the Holy Ghost, through which the Saviour offered on the cross, one all-sufficient sacrifice for the sins of mankind. “Through the ETERNAL SPIRIT,” he “offered HIMSELF, without spot to God.”¹

The boundless communications made to the Lord Jesus of a spiritual influence, are to be regarded, not merely as divine gifts bestowed on his human nature, but as a necessary result of that perfect *oneness* of design and operation, which subsists in the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, for the redemption of the world. Very distinct were the tokens given of this joint pur-

⁸ Isa. lxi, 1; *comp.* ch. xi, 2, and John iii, 34.

⁹ Ps. xlv, 6, 7; *comp.* ii, 2.

¹ Heb. ix, 14.

pose and action, on that memorable occasion, when the heavens were opened upon Jesus, and the Spirit of God descended like a dove, and lighted upon him; while the voice of the Father was heard, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."² Who then can doubt that heaven's vast design for man's salvation, is to be ascribed to the love of the Spirit, as well as to that of the Father and the Son?

But let us mark the gracious dealings of the Holy Ghost, in applying this scheme of mercy, to our own benefit. The Spirit who *co-operated* with Christ in his sacrifice on the cross, is, through that sacrifice, *himself* bestowed on mankind, to enlighten, teach, regenerate, purify, console, and ripen for heaven. May we not rest assured that he performs all these offices, in the most ardent, tender, and persevering love?

1. No one will deny, that there went forth a command of benevolence as well as power, when God said, "Let there be light; for without light, in the natural world, all would be confusion and danger to his living and sensitive creatures. Now the state of man in the fall, with respect to a right knowledge of God and of his law, is like that of the world in the obscurity of chaos. Not only is he dead in trespasses and sins; but he is "under the power of darkness;"³ he is sitting "in darkness and in the shadow of death;"⁴ and from this melancholy condition he can be delivered only through the agency of the Holy Spirit.

Since this is the clear doctrine of Scripture, it appears to follow, that whatsoever can be found among

² Matt. iii, 16, 17.

³ Col. i, 13.

⁴ Luke, i, 79.

our species, in any age or country, of *true* moral and spiritual light—be it fainter or brighter—must be ascribed, not to the natural reason of man, but directly or indirectly, to that divine Spirit. This remark is not without its just application, as I conceive, to the ancient philosophers of Greece and Rome; for we can scarcely deny, that some beams of heavenly light shot across the darkness of their own speculations. But where would have been the preaching of Noah, of Abraham, and of Job; where the precepts of Moses; where the fervent admonitions, and luminous discoveries, of the prophets; where the brightness of that “burning and shining light,” who preceded the coming of Jesus; had it not been for the *revealing* influence of the Holy Ghost? With still greater force may the same enquiry be made with respect to the apostles and evangelists. When they declared on the house-tops the truths which their Lord had taught them in secret places, it was “the Comforter” who brought all things to their remembrance, “whatsoever he had said unto them.”⁵ Like their predecessors, in the appointed course of divine revelation, they spake and “they *wrote* as they were moved of the Holy Ghost.”

Do we ask for a distinct and palpable evidence of the love of the Spirit? We may surely find such an evidence in the gift of the Holy Scriptures, so graciously bestowed on us, through his inspiring power—a gift of rare worth and richness, which embraces, in its scope and intention, the *whole family of man*.

2. We are to conceive of the Holy Spirit, however,

⁵ John xiv, 26.

not merely as the agent of divine revelation, but as a wise and benevolent *preceptor*, who gradually unfolds his lessons to our understanding, *as we are able to bear them* ; and at the same time impresses them upon our hearts. “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall *guide* you into all truth ; for he shall not speak of himself ; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.”⁶ That gracious Spirit, who gave the Scriptures forth, is the one *needful* interpreter of the sacred page ; and as far as relates to all that affects the work of salvation, he is ever ready to explain its meaning to the child-like and devotional inquirer.

But the teaching of the Spirit belongs to a *system* of training and government. He undertakes the whole conduct of our souls ; and the very condition on which he instructs us in the doctrines of truth, is obedience to the law of God. Although, for a time, these doctrines may be obscure to us, the *precepts* of religion are always clear ; and it is only as we humbly endeavour to add virtue to our faith, that the Spirit will enable us to add *knowledge* to our virtue. Again, when we have made some little proficiency in the school of Christ, the Spirit teaches us to apply our knowledge to its practical uses. He points out, with clearness to our souls, our peculiar lines of duty ; he prompts and directs our respective services in the church ; he opens our path before us, and shows us how to walk in it. We need not that any man teach

⁶ John xvi, 13, 14.

us, because “the *anointing*” teaches us “of all things, and is truth and no lie.”⁷

Nor does our Divine Teacher withhold from the objects of his care a gentle yet wholesome discipline. When we please him by our teachableness and obedience, he rewards us with his smiles ; but he is *grieved* by our indolence and rebellion ; and then, by withdrawing from us his sacred presence, and leaving us for a time in darkness and distress, he kindly instructs us to cleave to him, for the future, with greater constancy. When such is our sorrowful state, we may well adopt the prayer of the poet—

“ Return, O holy Dove, return !
Sweet messenger of rest,
I hate the sins that made thee mourn,
And drove thee from my breast ;
The dearest idol I have known,
Whate’er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from thy throne,
And worship only thee.”

COWPER.

The strength and constancy of the Spirit’s love is indeed made manifest by his long striving, not only with the living though halting members of his church, but even with a thoughtless and degenerate world. Truly may it be said, that our inward Monitor fulfils the office of charity itself—that he “*suffereth long and is kind.*”

3. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit . . . the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whi-

ther it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”⁸

The act of omnipotence by which the Spirit—in conformity with the will of the Father—first imparts to us a new and heavenly life, must surely be ascribed to unmerited *love*; and the same blessed attribute is manifested in every step of that process, by which he gradually restores the lost soul of man to the image of his Maker. The whole is a work of grace, that is, of *unmerited favour*, and therefore of *love*. To convince of sin, to humble the soul under a sense of it, to inspire a living faith in Jesus, to change the whole course of the affections, and finally, to cleanse the heart, and to deliver from all defilement, are offices of divine compassion, which the Spirit is ever willing to perform for all who seek the Lord. And who can deny that they demand the warmest gratitude of every Christian, towards that holy and benevolent Agent?

When we have exchanged the love of the world for the love of God, and have experienced the happiness of this blessed change—when, “instead of the thorn” has sprung up the “fir tree,” and “instead of the brier,” the “myrtle tree,”—we cannot refrain from declaring the praises of Him who is the immediate Author, in the economy of grace, of this *new creation*.

4. But the victory over sin is far from being accomplished in a moment. Long is the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit; and “lively and strong” are the enemies against whom it is our lot to contend. There are our many evil propensities, which, though

⁸ John iii, 6, 8.

weakened and brought under a yoke, are not yet destroyed; and there are, above all, “the rulers of the darkness of this world” ever ready to deceive and destroy. Nor are we to forget, that in the good order of providence, the Christian is often exposed to difficulty and distress—to the fiery trial both of his faith and patience. Where then is our refuge from day to day, but in the strengthening influences of the Holy Ghost? Weak and helpless in ourselves, we can fight the good fight of faith, only as we are clothed in the “armour of God,” and are strengthened “with might by his Spirit in the inner man.”⁹ Nor is this necessary aid withheld from those who pray for it—“God is able,” said the apostle, “to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.”¹

Now, in communicating this strengthening influence to the soul of man, the Holy Spirit displays not only beneficence, but *sympathy*; for *he* too pities our weakness, and breathes unutterable prayers on behalf of his people. “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, (performs our part in prayer) with *groanings which cannot be uttered.*”² Who then can doubt the love of the Spirit?

5. Finally, the Spirit is our *Comforter*. “If ye love me, keep my commandments; and I will pray

⁹ Eph. iii, 16.

¹ 2 Cor. ix, 8; *comp.* Col. i, 11.

² Rom. viii, 26.

the Father and he will give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever ; even the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him : but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.”³ “It is expedient for you that I go away ; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.”⁴

The title which is here rendered Comforter—in the Greek *Paraclete*—is one of a very comprehensive import. In its common use, it denotes the individual who adopts us as his clients, and who is ever ready to defend our cause, to protect our property and persons, to relieve our sorrows, and to supply our wants. As applied to the Holy Spirit, it may perhaps be illustrated by one of the figures of the Old Testament : “As birds flying, so will the LORD of HOSTS defend Jerusalem ; defending also, he will deliver it, and passing (or as in the Hebrew, *hovering*) over, he will preserve it.”⁵

While that Holy Dove spreads his wings and hovers over the Lord’s children, there descends upon them from above, a divine, preserving influence. If they transgress the limits of this influence, they are instantly exposed both to sin and Satan, but, so long as they stedfastly abide under it in all things, they are quiet in the centre of storms, and safe in the heat of danger.

But the influence of the Comforter not only preserves, but *gladdens*. It elevates every pure pleasure,

³ John xiv, 15—17.

⁴ John xvi, 7.

⁵ Isa. xxxi, 5.

and sweetens every bitter cup. Although the world may frown upon the Christian, and sorrow and suffering be his portion, he is taught of the Spirit to *rejoice* in the Lord. “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”⁶ This is the *sealing* of the “Holy Spirit of promise.”⁷ In seasons of peculiar favour, does the heavenly Visitant impress upon the hearts of the Lord’s children the seal of bliss; he fills them with “all joy and peace in believing;” and the happiness with which he inspires them, is the “earnest” of their inheritance—the sure foretaste of their future joys.

Such is the true explanation of the same apostle’s doctrine, that “our hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.”⁸ The hope which maketh ashamed, is that which fails to be realised, and which ends only in disappointment. “My brethren,” says Job, “have dealt deceitfully as a brook, and as the stream of brooks they pass away, which are blackish by reason of the ice, and wherein the snow is hid. What time they wax warm, they vanish; when it is hot, they are consumed out of their place; . . . the troops of Tema looked, the companies of Sheba waited for them; *they were confounded because they had hoped; they came thither and were ashamed.*”⁹ Not such is the hope of the

⁶ Rom. viii, 16, 17.

⁷ Eph. i, 13, &c.

⁸ Rom. v, 5.

⁹ Job. vi, 15—20.

humble, watchful, and *persevering* follower of the Lord Jesus Christ; for *grace* bestowed upon him here, is both the evidence and the pledge, of his approaching glory. When he enters upon an unseen world, he will joyfully discover, that the grace of the Spirit has been flowing towards him, from no shallow or evanescent fountain; but is there poured forth, in a boundless stream, for the gladdening of the glorified church, for ever.

Thus it appears, that in the anointing of Jesus as the Messiah, and in his enlightening, teaching, regenerating, sanctifying, and consoling, influences in ourselves, we are furnished with a series of distinct evidences of the Spirit's love for our fallen race, and more especially for the church of Christ. But as with the Father and the Son, so it is with the Spirit. We are invited and *constrained* to love him, not merely because of his beneficence towards ourselves, but because of his intrinsic and infinite worthiness, as an object of our affections. Benevolent he truly is, in the most exalted degree; but his benevolence is the accompaniment of his holiness. *Purity* is the very substance of his character; and *love* distinguishes the whole gracious work, through which that purity is conveyed to man.

On a deliberate view of that glorious scheme of mercy, which we have now been endeavouring to unfold, our hearts may well be filled with admiration

and astonishment, while they are humbled in the dust, and melted into love. What do we not owe of affection, gratitude, and allegiance, to the Father who loved us from eternity, and sent his Son into the world to save us ; to the Son who bore the bitter penalty of our sins on the cross, and who ever lives to make intercession for us ; and to the Spirit who applies these mercies, and prepares us for heavenly joy ? Yet, while we contemplate these distinctive operations of divine mercy, as demanding corresponding exertions, on our own part, of faith, love, and obedience, we must never, for a moment, forget that God is ONE, and that his essence cannot be divided. His love does indeed flow forth for the redemption of mankind, in the respective offices of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit ; but it is the love of a single, infinite, and incomprehensible BEING, who is the author, the medium, and the end of all things.

When JEHOVAH had laid the foundation of the earth, and had called into being his creature *man*, his love was celebrated by the harmony of the spheres and the applause of angels—"the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy."¹

" From harmony, from heavenly harmony,
This universal frame began ;
From harmony to harmony,
Through all the compass of the notes it ran,
The diapason closing full in *man*."

DRYDEN.

When the same love was yet more gloriously displayed in the mission and incarnation of the Prince of

¹ Job. xxxviii, 7.

Peace—when both the majesty and mercy of God were made manifest to mankind in the face of Jesus—the melody of heaven again became audible. “And suddenly there was with the shepherds a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and good will to man.”² Nor can it be doubted, that as this blessed dispensation extends its influence over the world, songs of praise will be more and more heard, from “the uttermost parts of the earth”—“even glory to the righteous.”³

“One song employs all nations, and all cry
Worthy the Lamb, for he was slain for us;
The dwellers in the vales and on the rocks
Shout to each other, and the mountain tops
From distant mountains catch the flying joy;
Till nation after nation, taught the strain,
Earth rolls the rapturous Hosannah round.”

COWPER.

Finally, when time shall be no longer—when the whole mediatorial scheme shall have been accomplished, and the elect of God gathered into heavenly places—one harmonious anthem will for ever ascend from that ransomed and glorified assembly which no man can number. In perfect accordance with cherubim and seraphim, will they sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb—“Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints;” and again, “Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!”⁴

² Luke ii, 13, 14.

³ Isa. xxiv, 16.

⁴ Rev. xv. 3, 4; xix, 6.

May we reflect, with humble reverence and holy joy, on the *creating, renovating, and crowning*, mercies of our God; may a sense of those mercies be in us an ever-flowing well-spring of love and gratitude; may we bear our part, individually, in the universal melody of thanksgiving; and, under an unutterable feeling of our obligations to God, may we surrender our whole hearts to his Spirit—our whole lives to his service!

One additional remark will bring the present branch of our subject to its conclusion. We have hitherto been considering the *contemplation* of God, only as a means of increasing that *love to him*, which is the *main* qualification for the joys and services of heaven; but, independently of this consideration, it has *in itself* a heaven-ward tendency. The *habit* of fixing our minds on God, as the subject of our thoughts and meditations, is one of which, in heaven, we shall find the full value. May we not believe that it is an endless source of occupation and delight to the inhabitants of that blessed place, to contemplate the perfections of the Deity—to enquire into the riches of his wisdom, love, and power—to admire the distinctive glories and perfect *oneness*, of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost?

Let us, then, in dependence on the grace of God, accustom ourselves, even here, to this divine employment. Amidst our many calls to active duty, let us still give due place to the *contemplative* part of the religious life. Let us frequently endeavour to lift up our souls above this present busy sphere, and to me-

ditate on the glory of Jehovah. Thus shall we be the better prepared, not only to love God perfectly, in that world of which love is the element ; but to unite with saints and angels in the highest of all applications of the mental faculty. “Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face ; now we know in part, but then shall we know, even as we are known.”

SECTION VI.

ON COMMUNION WITH GOD.

A MAN who has committed some greivous offence against his neighbour, and has neither repented of his fault nor been forgiven, has no inelination for the society of the offended party ; especially if the latter is a person in authority, and has power to inflict punishment ; on the contrary, he will rather flee from him ; and will even adopt the most ingenious devices to avoid his presenee. Just on the same grounds, but in a far greater degree, is fallen man *alienated* from God. While Adam continues in his uprightness, his highest happiness is to converse with his Maker ; but no sooner does he fall into sin, than the whole train of his feelings is altered—he *hides* himself “from the presenee of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden.”¹ The prodigal must repent of his iniquities, must confess them, and pray to be forgiven ; must be reconciled to the benevolent parent whom he has offended ; before he can eat his bread, and commune with him in love.

While, indeed, a man is built up, like the Pharisees of old, in self-righteousness, he may imagine himself

¹ Gen. iii, 8.

to be both able and fit to commune with the Moral Governor of the universe; but gross indeed is his delusion. Were the secrets of his heart made manifest to him, was he sensible of the utter vileness of his corrupt nature, he would instantly recoil from the presence of his judge. Repentance and reconciliation are steps which must be trodden by every man, before he can possibly enjoy an effective communion with the Author of all good. What a merey is it then, that God has “laid help on one that is mighty”—that he has raised Jesus from the dead—that he has “exalted” him “to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give *repentance* to Israel, and *forgiveness of sins*.”²

No sooner have we been brought to repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, than the door of communion with our Heavenly Father is opened to our souls. Unworthy as we are to hold converse in spirit with an infinitely holy Being, Christ has “consecrated for us a new and living way”³ to the throne of grace. Justified by faith in him, clothed in his righteousness, and depending on his perpetual intercession, we may now draw near to God with filial love and confidence, and call him “Abba, Father.”⁴ Yet we cannot perform this sacred duty in our own strength; we must seek the influence of that Holy Spirit, who can alone impart a living energy to our praises and our prayers. Through Christ we all “have access, *by one Spirit* unto the Father.”⁵

² Acts v, 31.

³ Heb. x, 20.

⁴ Rom. viii, 15.

⁵ Eph. ii, 18.

Communion with God, like the contemplation of that glorious Being, is *an act of the soul*, which originates in love, and has an unfailing tendency to brighten and confirm the affection from which it springs. On the other hand, if we neglect to avail ourselves of this blessed privilege—a privilege for which the mediation of Christ, and the aid of the Spirit, are so freely offered to us—our love to him, with whom we *ought* to commune, will subside into coolness. The subject may be illustrated by some of the most familiar realities of common life.

The chain of friendship—to adopt the simple metaphor of the North American Indians—is kept bright by the converse of friends. If we truly love our friend, and are on good terms with him, we naturally seek his society; and the more we enjoy of it—mind communing with mind—the more does our love for him abound. If, on the other hand, we fail to attend to the impulse of affection, and neglect our converse with him, the affection itself will soon be found to wither.

When a cessation of intercourse between friends is occasioned by circumstances over which they have no controul, there does indeed arise a certain effort of the mind, which counteracts the effect of absence, and overleaps the greatest distance. But it is an un-deviating rule, that when such cessation is voluntary, the affection which attracts them to each other, becomes weaker and weaker—*especially in the mind of the party who is the most guilty of neglect*. If, for example, a son prefers the pleasures of the world to the society of his parents, and gradually deserts his

home, until it becomes a strange place to him; although the yearnings of parental love may never cease to follow him, his own feelings of filial regard will be sure to decay; and unless re-awakened by some peculiarly touching circumstance, or by a divine power, will end in total indifference, or perhaps dislike. How important then that the Christian should be watchful and diligent, in *maintaining* his communion with God!

It is a fact which ought deeply to humble us, that although the blessing of such a communion is freely provided for us in the gospel of our Redeemer, the lingering corruptions of nature often interfere with our desire, and even with our willingness, fully to enjoy it. In the wandering away of our minds from the Father of mercies, even at times which we profess to devote to worship, and in our frequent disinclination to frequent the throne of grace, what evidences do we find of the deceitfulness of our own hearts! But to yield to the weakness which withdraws us from God—voluntarily to forsake our communion with him—is awfully dangerous, and may be fatal. In such a case, we alone are the party guilty of neglect; and, therefore, whatsoever may still be his compassion towards us, our love to him—that pure affection without which we cannot be qualified for the enjoyment of heaven—will certainly grow cool; and may, in the end, entirely perish.

1. Although true religion abounds in social feelings and duties, there is in its work on the individual soul, a depth of solitude with which none can interfere. Every heart knows its own bitterness; every

man must bear his own burden; and when we come at last to the valley of the shadow of death, we must pass through its darkness without any human companionship—*alone* with our God. Hence we may perceive the importance of that solitary devotion, in which the Christian, separated for a season from his fellow-men, can say with the Psalmist, “Whom have I in heaven but thee; and there is none upon earth that I *desire besides thee*.”⁶ Our Lord’s precept on the subject is clear and decisive—“But thou when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.”⁷

Jesus Christ himself virtually exemplified this precept, when, in the wilderness, or on the mountain’s side—far away from his disciples—he poured forth his soul in prayer, and held solemn converse with God his Father; and it is surely the duty of every Christian to obey his word, and follow his example. To retire occasionally during the day, and especially at the beginning and end of it, from all human society, for the purpose of self-examination and prayer, is a practice which Christianity may be said to enjoin, and which affords an important aid to every other duty. Such times of solitary religious exercise, are eminently useful for the deepening of our humility, and for the strengthening of our faith, our hope, and our virtue. The more diligent we are in private communion with God, the more conspicuously shall we

⁶ Ps. lxxiii, 25.

⁷ Matt. vi, 6.

bear the mark of his Spirit upon us, in our whole demeanour and conversation among men.⁸

2. Many are the significant hints given to us in Scripture, on the subject of *family religion*. The Lord knew that Abraham would “command his children and his *household* after him” to “keep the way of the Lord.”⁹ Joshua said, “As for me and *my house*, we will serve the Lord.”¹ The Israelites were commanded to teach the Lord’s precepts to their children, and to speak of them, as they sat in their houses; and the passover was celebrated among them separately, in every family.² David said, “I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.”³ Cornelius “feared God with all his house.”⁴ There was a *church* in the house of Nymphas; and another in that of Philemon;⁵ their respective families, doubtless,

⁸ Devotion is retirement from the world which God has made, to *him alone*: it is to withdraw from the avocations of sense, to employ our attention wholly upon *him*, as upon an object actually present, to yield ourselves up to the influence of the divine presence, and to give full scope to the affections of gratitude, love, reverence, trust, and dependence; of which infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, is the natural and only adequate object.—*Bishop Butler’s second sermon on the Love of God*, p. 247. Devotion is the work of the heart, it is transacted in the inner man; the principle of it is divine love, and its very nature is nothing else, but the different motions and appearances of this pure flame in the soul, either disposing it to an absolute surrender of itself to God, or humbling it under a deep sense of its own unworthiness, or exerting in it mighty and vehement desires, or in fine, making it dissolve in praise and thanksgiving.—*Monro’s Pious Institution of Youth*, vol. i, p. 211.

⁹ Gen. xviii, 19.

¹ Josh. xxiv, 15.

² Dent. vi, 7; Exod. xii, 21.

³ Ps. ci, 2.

⁴ Acts x, 2

⁵ Col. iv, 15; Philem. 2.

being united in the fellowship of the gospel, and in the daily worship of God. There can indeed be no doubt, that nearness of natural connexion ought ever to be accompanied, among Christians, by a corresponding intimacy in matters of religion. Husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, should be helpers of each other's faith and joy; and should account it a privilege of no trifling value, to frequent the throne of grace in each other's company. With respect to our children, more particularly, it is surely our duty, by watchful instruction, and sometimes by uniting with them in their private religious exercises, to train them in the habit of daily prayer—just as we see the parent bird, by frequent example and experiment, teaching and inducing her young ones to use the wings which God has given them.

Nor ought we to neglect to extend a religious care over our servants. Our whole household should be united, at least once in the day, in the reading of the Holy Scriptures, and in drawing near, in spirit, to that gracious Being from whom we derive all our blessings both temporal and spiritual. Thus shall we experience the fulfilment of that word of promise—"The Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for upon all the glory shall be a defence; and there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the day-time from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain."⁶

It is on occasions of this description, that Chris-

⁶ Isa. iv, 5, 6.

tians discover the advantage of *sympathy* in religion. Together they mourn over their transgressions, together they rejoice in the goodness of the Lord; as with the heart of one man, they pray for his grace and protection, and praise him for all his benefits. Thus are they individually strengthened in their Christian course, while they maintain *the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*"

3. Similar effects are produced, in a more diffusive manner, when Christians are engaged in *congregational worship*; the sympathy which is then often excited, being more peculiarly one of *joy*. The church, indeed, like individual Christians, is liable to seasons of affliction and distress; but the general complexion and *true spirit* of her public services, are such as the Psalmist has described; "Serve the Lord with gladness, come before his presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord he is God; it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgivings, and into his courts with praise: be thankful to him and bless his name; for the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting, and his truth endureth to all generations."⁷

That it is our bounden duty, by the regular attendance of public worship, to confess our allegiance to the King of kings, admits of no question. We are commanded in Scripture not to "forsake the assembling" of ourselves together;⁸ and in the zealous performance of this great duty, we have a sure guide

⁷ Ps. c, 2.—5.

⁸ Heb. x, 25.

in the example of Jesus Christ himself. How often do we read of his appearing in the synagogues on the Sabbath days; and how important is the information given us by the evangelist, that this was his "*custom*."⁹ Blessed be his holy name, he still condescends to bestow his presence upon his disciples, when they are gathered together, for the solemn purpose of worshipping the Father.¹ "He is for a crown of glory and for a diadem of beauty unto the residue of his people;"² he brings them into "the banqueting house," and his "banner" over them is "love."³ Thus are they enabled to commune, in spirit, one with another, and with him their common Lord; and while they reverently wait upon him, their strength is renewed for every good word and work.

Our *tastes*, as well as our actions, are to a great extent under the sway of habit, and are therefore capable of being strengthened and improved in any particular direction. How desirable then is it, that in dependence on the grace of God, which can alone *turn* the heart of man, we should make the best use of this facility in our nature, and cultivate both in ourselves and others, a *taste* for devotion! The Christian must be careful not to cast a gloom over religion. He is brought into the *sunshine* of truth; and under its gladdening influence, he must himself learn, and he must endeavour to teach his children, to take *delight* in religious pursuits; and, above all, in the worship of the Creator.

⁹ Luke iv, 16; *comp.* Matt. xii, 9, &c.

¹ Matt. xviii, 20.

² Isa. xxviii, 5.

³ Cant. ii, 4.

This end will be greatly promoted by regularity and constancy in the performance of our devotional duties ; for *taste* and *practice*, are ever found to go hand in hand, and to act and react on each other. The more we take pleasure in any action, the more prone we are to perform it ; and again, the more diligent we are in the performance of it, the more necessary it becomes to our comfort and enjoyment.

For this, as well as other reasons, it may be regarded as a Christian duty, to set apart an hour or two during the week, besides the Sabbath day, for the solemn and happy purpose of public worship. The temporary exchange of our usual pursuits for this holy employment—while the world at large is engrossed in its own concerns—can scarcely fail to be profitable to our souls, and acceptable to our God and Saviour. But how precious to every one who is serious in the pursuit of heavenly things, is the Sabbath itself ! What cause for thankfulness is it, that God has ordained the cessation of worldly labours on every recurring seventh day, that his children may enjoy a wholesome rest ; and that in the quietness of this rest, they may devote their undivided faculties to communion with himself ! The sabbath is indeed an institution pre-eminently calculated to remind us of *divine benevolence* ; and is, therefore, peculiarly *suited* by the heartfelt melody of thanksgiving and praise.

4. Those who are the most aware of the weakness of our nature, will be the least disposed to underrate the importance of the outward *frame work* of religious duty. Although Christianity is not a religion of forms and ceremonies, it claims the assistance of many

external observances ; such, for example, as retirement from society for the purpose of private devotion, the appointment of stated times for reading the Scriptures in our families, the orderly keeping of the Sabbath day, and the regular attendance of our places of public worship. Yet all these things are useless, and may even be a means of the further hardening of our hearts, unless we maintain, in connexion with them, the *life* of true worship. “God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” To frequent the house of prayer ; to bow the knee before him ; to draw near to him with the lip—*while our hearts are far from him*—can be regarded only as a mockery and offence. “Bring no more vain oblations ; incense is an abomination unto me ; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with ; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth ; they are a trouble unto me, I am weary to bear them.”⁴

Little will it serve the purposes of friendship, to seek the company of those whom we love, if we forget them while in their presence, and refuse to give our *minds* to them. In such a case, there may be the appearance of brotherhood ; but the flame of true love will presently subside. So it is in the infinitely higher concern of communion with God. Although it is assisted by outward observances, it is an act of the soul alone ; and it is only as the *immortal and spiritual* part of man holds converse with its Creator and its Redeemer, that we can know any thing of

⁴ Isa. i, 13, 14.

true worship, or experience a corresponding increase of our love to God. “As the heart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth *my soul* after thee, O God; my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God.”⁵—“*My soul*, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him.”⁶

Here, however, it ought to be again expressly noticed, that as the soul of man has no tendency to commune with God, until it is quickened of the Spirit; so, in order to maintain this communion, we are in perpetual need of the same life-giving power. In all our religious services—in all our approaches to God, whether private or public—we must abstain from any dependence on our own wisdom and strength, and cast ourselves in faith on the gracious aid of the Holy Spirit.

Now, although the outward offices of religion, serve a highly important purpose in promoting its practical operation, we are not to forget, that, under divine influence, the soul is capable of communion with God, when these offices are withdrawn. The Christian may retire into the solitude of his own heart, and hold communion with his Maker, even while he is in the midst of a multitude; nor will his worship of that Supreme Object of his regard and affections, be confined to any stated periods set apart for the purpose. He is taught to realise the perpetual presence of his God; and on every passing occasion of life, to lift up his heart to *him* as to a Father and a Friend. Certainly it ought to be the habit of our souls, as

⁵ Ps. xlii, 1, 2.

⁶ Ps. lxii, 5.

the hours of each day pass over us, frequently to bring our ignorance and weakness to the Fountain of light and strength—our poverty and emptiness, to the *fulness which is in Christ*.

“Prayer is the soul’s sincere desire,
Utter’d, or unexpress’d ;
The motion of a hidden fire,
That trembles in the breast.

Prayer is the breathing of a sigh,
The falling of a tear,
The upward glancing of an eye,
When none but God is near.”

MONTGOMERY.

It is chiefly through this hidden exercise of a devotional mind, that the Christian *walks with God*; and the more we are thus brought into contact with his goodness and power, the greater will be our delight in such a walk.⁷ The proneness of the regene-

7 “En effet, mes freres,” says the eloquent Massillon, “la prière n’est pas un effort de l’esprit, un arrangement d’idées, une pénétration profonde des mystères et des conseils de Dieu ; c’est un simple mouvement du cœur, c’est un gémissement de l’âme vivement touchée à la vue de ses misères ; c’est un sentiment vif et secret de nos besoins et de notre foiblesse, et une humble confiance, qui l’expose à son Seigneur, pour en obtenir la délivrance et la remède. La prière ne suppose pas dans l’âme qui prie de grandes lumières, des connaissances rares, un esprit plus élevé et plus cultivé que celui des autres hommes ; elle suppose seulement plus de foi, plus de componction, plus de desir d’être délivré de ses tentations et des ses misères.” “In fact, my brethren, prayer is not an effort of the understanding, an arrangement of ideas, a profound inquiry into the mysteries and counsels of God ; it is a simple movement of the heart ; it is the groaning of a soul keenly affected in the view of its own wretchedness ; it is a lively and secret feeling of our wants and our weakness, and a humble confidence in exposing them to

rate soul to ascend in living aspirations after him, will constantly increase; and every act of secret communion with the Lord, will assist in confirming that *love* towards him, from which it springs. Nor are these acts confined to prayer—often are they the movements of a spirit filled with praise. If it is our duty and privilege to “pray without ceasing,” it equally becomes us, in “every thing;” to “give thanks.”⁸

It appears, then, that in order to be fitted for communion with God, fallen man must first repent and be reconciled to his Creator—that the steadfast maintenance of that communion in the Christian believer, is a principal means, in the order of divine grace, for the increase and confirmation of his love—that he is therefore bound to exercise diligence in the devotional duties of the closet, of the family circle, and of the church—that the outward part of these duties is

the Lord, in order to obtain deliverance and cure. Prayer does not imply, in the soul which prays, great talents, rare acquirements, an understanding more exalted and cultivated than that of other men; it implies only more faith, more compunction, and a greater desire to be delivered from our temptation and our misery.”—*Sermon sur la prière.*

“Nay, one thing I know more; that the prayer which is the most forcible, transcends and far exceeds all power of words. For St. Paul, speaking unto us of the most effectual kind of prayer, calls it sighs and groans that cannot be expressed. Nothing cries so loud in the ears of God as the sighing of a contrite earnest heart. It requires not the voice, but the mind; not the stretching of the hands, but the intention of the heart; not any outward shape or carriage of the body, but the inward behaviour of the understanding. How then can it slacken your worldly business and occasions, to mix them with sighs and groans, which are the most effectual kind of prayer?”—*John Hales’ Golden Remains.*

⁸ 1 Thess. v, 17, 18.

salutary and even needful, as an aid to inward worship; but that without *life*, it is useless, and may even be injurious—finally, that the secret intercourse of *the soul* with God, is the *vital breath* of the Christian, and ought to pervade the whole course of his conversation and experience.

Two additional remarks may be made in conclusion.

1. Communion is in its nature reciprocal. Not only are we to pour out our souls in prayer to the Lord, but we are to receive his mind, or counsel, in return. It is on this ground, as I conceive, that the reading of the Holy Scriptures forms an essential part of our private and family devotional duties; for in that sacred volume, God condescends to speak to us—to develop his mind for our instruction, guidance, and consolation. And, on the same principle, we recognise a connexion between public worship and the ministry of the gospel, which universally *professes* to be an expression of the mind of God. And such undoubtedly it ever will be, so long as it is scriptural in its character, and is offered under the influence and teaching of the Holy Spirit. But our Heavenly Father is graciously pleased to communicate his will to man, by a voice which speaks within, and which will ever direct us in the way of holiness. As long as his reconciled children obey that voice, and lead a life of righteousness, so long are they the children of light, and enjoy a free communion with Him in whom there is no darkness. But no sooner do they disobey their divine Monitor, and follow the devices of their own hearts, than their communion with God is interrupted. Even an angry feeling, or a polluting

thought, will hinder the breathing of the soul towards the eternal Source of peace and purity. The spiritual man is gifted with a knowledge of “the *mind of Christ*,”⁹ and just in the degree in which he is conformed to it, in his own disposition and conduct, is he capable of communing with God, in that pure love which sin alone can separate.

2. We have now been considering communion with God as an act of the soul, eminently calculated to increase our love for him; and, therefore, to prepare us for loving him eternally. But this communion with God—the Father, Son, and Spirit—like the contemplation of that glorious Being, is itself one blessed occupation—one boundless source of enjoyment and happiness—to the saints in glory. The frame and habit of it are suited to the very nature and character of heaven; and will there be found a source of infinite and endless pleasure. There the soul, delivered from the shackles of mortality, draws near to its Creator, and converses with its Saviour, in the freedom of perfect purity; there the assembled saints, unnumbered and innumerable, for ever worship the Father in spirit and in truth; and receive, in return, the full influences of that eternal mind which *wills* their holiness and joy.

⁹ 1 Cor. ii, 19.

SECTION VII.

ON SUBMISSION TO THE WILL OF GOD.

THE Christian is accustomed to trace *all things* in nature, and providence, and in grace, to the will of that infinite Being, in whom dwells the perfection of wisdom and holiness; and in those rules by which the world is governed, both naturally and morally, he recognises the fixed determinations of that will—the *laws* of an unchanging God.

1. In the order of *nature*, phenomena or events succeed each other on perfectly uniform principles; so that we soon learn from experience, and afterwards, from the constitution of our minds, cannot but feel assured, that certain causes, in the material world, are always followed by certain effects. Now that any given cause should, under the same circumstances, uniformly produce a particular effect, is an appointment of the divine will, which is usually called a *law of nature*. We cannot doubt that many such laws are in action, which have not yet been detected by the scrutiny of man; but others are either obvious to common observation, or have been brought to light by scientific inquiry.

For example, it has been fully proved that all particles of matter attract one another; and that the force of that attraction (until they come into apparent contact) is in the inverse proportion of the squares of their distances. Philosophers have ascertained not only the existence, but as far as the scope of their investigation extends, the ubiquity of this law; which indeed appears to be God's chosen instrument for preserving the material universe in its present order. But of its origin it is utterly out of their power to give any account but one—God said, Let it be, and it was. Whatsoever, indeed, may be the triumphs of inductive philosophy, in classifying and generalising the operations of nature, and in reducing the apparent number of the laws by which she is governed, our ultimate resort—the final rest for the inquisitiveness of man's mind—can be found only in the *fiat of omnipotence*.

Now it is impossible for the Christian to doubt that the will of God, even in the government of the material world, is moved by a spring of infinite wisdom and benevolence; and that all the laws of nature are what they are, because it is *best* that they should be so—*best* for the ultimate happiness of his rational creatures, and *best* for his own glory.

2. Between the course of nature and that of *providence*, there is an obvious, and in this world, a necessary connexion. But the latter assumes a distinct character, when regarded as the order in which the Supreme Governor of the world deals with his rational creature, *man*. The laws by which these dealings are regulated, are by no means so clearly inscribed on the

annals of man's history, in this lower world, as are the laws of nature on the face of the material universe. Yet we are not left without some perceptible indications, that they are general and permanent ; above all, that they are moral, exactly adapted to the holiness and benevolence of the Deity. These indications are amply confirmed in Scripture, which teaches us that God is *holy*—that he is also *love*—and that he deals with mankind, under every variety of time, place, and circumstance, on principles of perfect righteousness, which can never change. If “clouds and darkness are round about him, justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne.”

Experience affords sufficient evidence that the *main law*, by which the course of divine providence towards man is regulated, is, that *virtue should produce happiness, and vice misery*. But this law is checked and modified by two provisions of vast practical importance. The first is, that man is here placed in a *state of trial*, involving many dangers and temptations ; in order that his character may be put to the proof, and finally developed as a ground of judgment to come. The second is, that this state of trial is appointed to serve the purpose of *moral discipline*, that, by an experimental process, (often of a rough and mysterious nature) we may, under grace, be weaned from our iniquities, and trained to those dispositions which are alone suited to the heavenly state. We have no reason, therefore, to be astonished at that trial of the saints' faith, to which the sacred writers so frequently allude ; namely, that, in this lower scene of action, *vice is often triumphant, and virtue as often depressed*

and persecuted. Look at some fragment of an animal—some broken piece of a claw or a bone—how unsightly it appears ; how unworthy of the hand of infinite skill and wisdom ! But let it be seen in connexion with its corresponding parts. Let the animal stand before us in his native beauty and vigour. How perfect is the living machinery ! how well it works ! how seemingly are its proportions ! how unexceptionable the whole creature ! Just so the *apparent* interruptions of God's righteous government, in this world of darkness, may be to us very strange and unsightly ; yet there can be no question, that, in their connexion with the universal scope of that government, they will, in the end, be found to form part of a perfectly harmonious and glorious whole.¹

3. In considering the manifestations of the will of God, in nature and providence, we advert to laws with which no creature can intermeddle ; for he has not only ordained them, but, by the unceasing exertions of an omnipresent power, himself carries them into execution. But there is another branch of the subject, with which we have a still more immediate and pressing concern—*The will of God respecting our own conduct.* Here he sees fit to deal with us as free and responsible agents ; he permits us to choose between good and evil ; he gives us a timely notice of their respective consequences ; he offers his gracious aid, to enable us to walk in the way of righteousness ; he *wills*, without compelling, our holiness.

The will of God, as it relates to the conduct of his rational creatures, is manifested in certain permanent

¹ See *Leibnitz, Essais sur la Theodicée.*

rules, which constitute his *moral law*; and it is one of the chief triumphs of the religion of the Bible, that it overthrows all fallacious standards of morals—such as the “fitness” of the Stoics, and the “utility” of the Epicureans—and settles every question of right and wrong, by a simple reference to the will of Omnipotence. Yet this will is itself determined by unchangeable principles of holiness, justice, benevolence, and truth. These attributes are essential to the nature of our Heavenly Father; and they are the ultimate foundation of his law.²

The moral laws of God, as they relate to ourselves, are the *expression* of his righteous will; and both the will and the expression of it are necessary, in order to render us responsible for our actions to the Author of our being. For, in the absence of either, there can, *to us*, be no law; and “where no law is, there is no transgression.” How then is the moral will of God *expressed* to his creature man?

In the first place, it is revealed in the heart; so that, by an intuitive perception, every man knows that virtue is right, and vice is wrong. Whatsoever may be the perversions of our conscience in the fall, there is a light which so far illuminates it, that we cannot

² “The laws also, by which the operations of our love are regulated, are holy, just, and good. They are not dictated by short-sightedness or inconstancy, or chargeable with any imperfections. They are holy in their origin, for they emanate from the divine perfections; they are just in their injunctions, for they have regard to the relations in which creatures stand to the Creator and to each other; they are good in their effect, for they promote the divine glory and the well-being of the universe.”—See *Joyce, Love to God*, 3rd edition, pp. 103, 104.

but approve of justice, honesty, and benevolence, and condemn the contrary, both in our own actions and in those of others; and the more this light is followed in practice, the more brightly does it shine; the more tender and effective does the conscience become. There are three elements in this matter; first, the natural percipient power, which is conscience; secondly, the eternal moral truth, which is the object perceived; and thirdly, the light by which that moral truth is revealed, and through which, therefore, it becomes *law* to ourselves. Now I conceive that this light—whether more or less faint—is of far too pure a character to be ascribed to corrupt human nature; and that it must rather be regarded as the universal visitation of a divine influence, bestowed on mankind through the redemption which is in Christ.

How unspeakably would it promote our happiness, were we more obedient to the law of God, as it is written on the tablets of the heart! In the meantime, however, the *same* law is unfolded in the Holy Scriptures. It was confirmed, by revelation, to the patriarchs and prophets of old; it formed an essential part of the Mosaic dispensation; and, as the tables of stone on which it was written were safely kept in the ark of the Covenant, so is the law itself inclosed and preserved inviolate, in the bosom of Christianity.

Nothing indeed can be more admirable, or more clearly indicative of the wisdom of God, than the whole preceptive code of the New Testament. There the law enjoined on us, for our *practice*, not only asserts its native authority, and is unfolded in more than its ancient spirituality, but is enlarged by a variety of

provisions, which belong to the character of the Christian revelation, and correspond with its extent.

Although much of *divine truth* was revealed to the ancient Israelites, we must have recourse to the New Testament, for a full and explicit account of many of its features—such, for example, as the ruin and guilt of mankind in the fall; the eternity of rewards and punishments; the holiness and love of the Father, as manifested in the scheme of redemption; the deity and incarnation of the Son; the atonement made on the cross for the sins of all men; the priesthood, advocacy, and reign of Christ; and the divine character, inward work, and perpetual guidance of the Holy Spirit. Now with this discovery of truth, keeps pace the *unfolding* of the Lord's precepts. In the gospel of Jesus Christ, all men are *commanded*, by a voice from heaven of inconceivable energy, to humble themselves before God; to repent of their sins; to believe in Jesus as their Saviour; to wash their polluted robes, and make them white in his blood; to open their hearts to the influence of the Holy Spirit; to abide under that influence in all things; to cease from sin; and to bring forth the fruit of righteousness, in all its ripeness, variety, and abundance. "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."³

Nor are we left to conjecture what are the *particu-*

³ Rom. viii, 3, 4.

lar characteristics of that life of holiness, into which the faith of the Christian is intended to conduct him. Every separate fruit of the Spirit is distinctly set before us; and is pressed upon our attention for its own sake, and, as it were, on its own merits—love and loyalty to God, reliance on his goodness, devotion to the service of Christ, the fixing of the soul on heaven, watchfulness, perseverance in prayer, purity of heart, integrity, temperance, fortitude, patience, meekness, forbearance, long-suffering, the return of good for evil, gentleness, lowliness of mind, and that universal charity which is the bond of perfectness.

From the view which has now been taken of the manifestations of the will of God, in nature, in providence, and in grace, some conception may be formed of the comprehensiveness of that short petition—so often used, but so little understood—“*Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*” In heaven the will of God is done perfectly. No murmurs against his laws, either natural or moral, find their way into the breasts of angels and glorified spirits; no weakness of the flesh, no lingering corruption, interrupts their obedience to the King of kings. Such then is the *mark*, at which it is our duty constantly to *aim*. A perfect submission to the will of our Heavenly Father, is the *only* practical standard proposed to us by Christianity.

Now submission to the divine will consists of two parts—first, *resignation in suffering*; and secondly, *obedience in acting*.

Impossible as it is for us to interfere with the dealings of God, who, in one point of view, stands apart from his creatures in solitary and awful independence, man is ever prone to murmur against them, when they do not coincide with his own views and wishes. Even the general laws of nature excite his discontent, when the particular operation of them brings him into suffering; and when, in the moral yet mysterious order of Providence, some especial chastisement is laid upon him, he frets himself against the Lord, and calls him a hard master. In the depth of his depravity, he is even tempted to "*curse God and die.*" But Christianity bids us to cease from our complaints, and to resign ourselves, with a willing spirit, to whatsoever it may here be our lot to suffer.

This willing spirit must arise from genuine humility in the feeling of our own demerits, and from a childlike reliance on the wisdom and goodness of God; and it must be accompanied with long patience, with cheerfulness of demeanour, with joy in the Lord, and above all, with the heart's own melody of thanksgiving and praise. Such are the demands, and such is the power, of the religion of Jesus—such the matchless alchemy by which his grace turns all things into gold.⁴

Again, there is nothing more distasteful to the natural man, than the piercing spirituality, the comprehensive grasp, and the binding authority, of God's

⁴ "Our resignation to the will of God may be said to be *perfect*, when our will is lost and resolved up into his, when we rest in his will as our *end*, as being itself most just, and right, and good."—*Bishop Butler's Sermon on Love to God.*

precepts. The child of darkness prefers his own devices—he is a rebel to the core. But Christianity requires an uncompromising compliance with the whole counsel of God, as it relates to our conduct. Our whole life must be regulated by the directions of his perfect law. No rebellious feeling, no corrupt motive or thought, must be harboured; no favourite sin spared; no unwelcome duty omitted. We must “walk in the light as [God] is in the light,”⁵—implicitly following the dictates of the Holy Spirit, who guides into all righteousness.

Such being the true scriptural standard of submission and obedience to the manifested will of God, we may proceed to apply the subject in a few practical remarks. From these it will presently appear, how intimately *divine love* is connected with the whole course of the Christian’s life and conversation.

1. If many of the known practices of professing Christians, and still more the secret annals of our own thoughts and conduct, fail to bear a comparison with this pure and lofty standard of submission to the divine will, the deficiency may probably arise, in the first place, from the *weakness and instability of our faith*.

A firm belief in the truth and promises of our God, and a childlike reliance on Jesus as our Saviour, are inseparably connected, as we have seen, with the preceptive code of the New Testament. Not only do they form a prominent part of our Christian duty, but they are the means of preparing us for a willing

⁵ 1 John i, 7.

obedience to the Lord's commandments in every other respect. Good works spring from them, as a plant grows from its root. Were this truth adequately impressed upon us, we should not rest satisfied with a partial and wavering faith. We should pray to be delivered from the "heart of unbelief," as from the most dangerous of evils, and we should earnestly seek to be strengthened of the Lord, to rely upon him with a perfect affiance.

The pardoning mercies of God are in their very nature spontaneous—not bestowed upon us for any work or merit of our own, but flowing from the fathomless spring of his own compassions, through the one availing channel of Christ crucified; and *faith* is the appointed instrument by which those mercies are applied to ourselves.

" O how unlike the complex works of man,
Heaven's easy, artless, unincumber'd plan !
No meretricious graces to beguile,
No clustering ornaments to clog the pile ;
From ostentation as from weakness free,
It stands, like the cerulean arch we see,
Majestic in its own simplicity.
Inscribed above the portal, from afar
Conspicuous as the brightness of a star ;
Legible only by the light they give,
Stand the soul quick'ning words—*Believe and Live.*"

COWPER.

Having repented of all his transgressions, and having cast the burden of them on the Lord, the believer is no longer oppressed with the slavish fears of a condemned criminal. He enjoys the privilege of filial freedom. Delivered by a hand of infinite mercy

from guilt and condemnation, he is set at liberty to run, with all diligence, in the way of God's commandments; while the humble yet settled hope of a glorious immortality animates his zeal, and quickens his footsteps in the race of virtue.

Now there can be no doubt, that, in leading us to a living faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit very generally lays hold of the affections. He softens us and brings us into contrition. He renews us in the *spirit* of our minds; he gives a turn to our tempers and dispositions, as it relates to God; and thus makes way for the opening of the blind eye—for the clearing of the spiritual understanding.

We learn from the apostle Paul, that *faith works by love*; and common experience confirms the truth of his doctrine; for although *belief* is founded on evidence, our capacity for receiving evidence in its true force depends in no small degree on the state of our affections. How often do we find that the clearest testimonies on any subject are all in vain for the purpose of convincing a man, if passion or self-interest happens to be ranged on the other side. So it is with Christianity. The proofs of its divine origin are strong and abundant; yet they are in general either rejected or neglected by those who love their sins and the world more than God. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."⁶

But no sooner is a man's heart made tender, than he begins to form a just estimate of Christian truth.

⁶ John iii, 19.

He no longer denies either its authority or its importance. He embraces it readily, as his hope and his salvation; and, proving his faith by his obedience, he is soon rewarded with an increase of his knowledge. The Spirit takes of the things of Christ, and unfolds them to his soul.⁷

Now as love makes way for faith, and faith works by love, so it is unquestionably true, that the exercise of faith—the fixing of the heart and understanding on Christ as the way, the truth, and the life—has a mighty efficacy in increasing and confirming our love to God. It brings him near to us in the perfection of his holiness, and in the fulness of his mercy; it presents him to us in Christ Jesus, as the worthy

⁷ These views are in accordance with the following remarks from the pen of that *true* philosopher, Dr. Abercrombie of Edinburgh.

“It is on the principles now referred to, that, according to a doctrine which has been often and keenly controverted, we hold a man to be responsible for his belief. The state of mind which constitutes belief is, indeed, one over which the will has no direct power. But belief depends upon evidence; the result of even the best evidence is entirely dependent on attention; and attention is a voluntary intellectual state over which we have a direct and absolute control. As it is therefore by prolonged and continued attention that evidence produces belief, a man may incur the deepest guilt by his disbelief of truths which he has failed to examine with the care due to them. This exercise of attention is entirely under the control of the will; *but the will to exercise it respecting moral truth is closely connected with the love of that truth; and this is intimately dependent on the state of moral feeling of the mind.* It is thus that a man’s moral condition influences the conclusions of his judgment; and it is thus, that, on the great questions of moral truth, there may be guilt attached to a process of the understanding, while there is both guilt and moral degradation in that mental condition from which it sprung.”—*Philosophy of the Moral Feelings*, 2nd edit. p. 167.

object of profound adoration and unbounded gratitude. The stronger and more simple our faith therefore in the truth and promises of Scripture—the more cordial and complete our reception of the gospel of Jesus Christ—the more fervent will be our love to that holy and glorious Being who is the Author of all our mercies.

2. Vain, however, will be our belief in the glad tidings of salvation through the crucified Immanuel, unless it be followed by a holy decision of mind in giving up ourselves to God. The want of this *holy decision* may be regarded as the *second grand cause* of the imperfections which so often interrupt our conformity to the divine will. When Saul was arrested in his career of violence, by a light and voice from above, he “was not disobedient to the heavenly vision;” he surrendered at discretion to the all-conquering Saviour; forsook at once his self-righteousness and self-will, and became, without reserve, what every Christian ought to be, a *servant of the Lord*. The die was cast, which for ever determined his adherence to the cause of Jesus Christ and *him crucified*.

Now although the work of grace is for the most part much more gradual, the same unconditional surrender of the soul to divine visitation, is absolutely fundamental in the Christian life. “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.”⁸ This declaration was true as it regarded Jesus Christ himself, who died and rose again, for the salvation of mankind; and it is also true with respect to his fol-

⁸ John xii, 24.

lowers. They must die unto sin—their rebellious will must be given up, even unto death ; and then, under the quickening influence of the Holy Spirit, they will bring forth, in abundance, their fruit unto righteousness.

3. As the will rules the conduct, so the affections *move* the will ; and Christianity so excites and directs our affections, that, under divine grace, they become *motives* to an unconditional surrender of the soul to God. Our fear is brought into action by a view of his holiness, and of judgment to come ; our hope, by the promise of eternal life ; and both these perform their own part in the work of salvation ; but, above all, it is *love*, drawn forth by the mercies of the Father and of Christ, and brought (as we have seen) into its full action through faith, which melts down the pride and hardness of our hearts and *humbles us into unqualified submission*.

Had Saul been met only by storms and terrors, he might possibly have wrapped around him the mantle of self-righteousness more closely than before ; but the gentle accents of a Saviour's *love*, subdued him in a moment ; and the raging Pharisee lay prostrate at the feet of Jesus. The love of self, of the world, and of sin, quickly gave way to "the expulsive power of a new affection ;" and it is no wonder that he afterwards pressed upon others, the motive which had so mightily prevailed with himself. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by *the mercies of God*, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice ; holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service ; and be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed

by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.”⁹

The presenting of the body, that is, of *the whole man*, as a living sacrifice to the Lord, is precisely that unconditional surrender of the will, to which we are now adverting. It is the taking up of the cross of Christ, in the truest and deepest sense of the expressions—it is the giving up of the old man, with all his corruptions, to crucifixion; that the new man may be formed in us, without any obstruction on our parts, in conformity with the will of God, and “for a purpose of his glory.”

4. As love is the principal motive which leads to this surrender of the will, so the surrender itself is necessary to the continuance of love. If we refuse to make it, the affection which ought to have led us to it will certainly wither. On the contrary, if we bow before the Lord with unreserved submission, our love towards him will be both strengthened and enlarged; and, while its energy is increased, it will be *set free* for its further operations. Saul presents his body a living sacrifice—he gives up all for Christ; and now that love for Jesus, which prompted this sacrifice, burns with ever-increasing brightness. Every successive act of his soul, in resignation or obedience to his Master’s will, adds fervency to the flame. No dangers can appal him; no difficulties can stay his course; in the face of rebuke, ridicule, persecution, and death itself, he pursues the path of duty. *Love* is the abiding feeling through which he is preserved

⁹ Rom. xii, 1, 2.

in patience; *love* the ever-acting spring which imparts to him a perpetual motion, in the service of his Redeemer.

5. Let us suppose, for a moment, that the apostle's will had been only partially given up in the hour of his visitation; that, instead of quite renouncing his self-righteousness, he had persisted in partly placing his dependence on his old favorite, the law; and that, instead of devoting himself without reserve to the best of Masters, he had partly sought his own interest and reputation as a doctor among the Jews.—What would have been the consequence? His life would have presented, for a time, a *mixture* of Christianity with pharisaical policy; but his love for Christ, and therefore for the Father, although we may suppose it to have been sincere, would have gradually subsided; and the mind, divided between grace and the world, would, in the end, have become *absorbed* in the latter. How many thousands are there among professing Christians whose case has now been exemplified! They acknowledge the truth of Christianity; they hear the glad tidings of the love of God; they feel *some* love for him in return; but they neither entirely renounce a dependence on their own works as a ground of their hope, nor fully resign themselves to the disposal and government of their Lord. The consequence is that, in the midst of a good and sometimes even a high profession of religion, they retain their pride, their covetousness, and their self-indulgence. Grace grows weaker and weaker, and the world stronger and stronger, in their bosoms, until the latter becomes once more their undisputed master. How

awful will it be to such as these, when death overtakes them, to enter eternity with nothing to depend upon but an empty creed; hardened in habits of mind, which are utterly at variance with the joys and employments of heaven; and filled with appetites and desires which, being deprived of their corresponding objects, must henceforth, in hell, prey upon the soul itself!

6. Paul often declares himself to be “an *apostle* by the will of God.” Now we may rest assured, that had not his will been surrendered at discretion, he would neither have been enabled to lead a life of holiness, nor have been qualified for his *peculiar* path of religious duty. His whole work and service would have been marred; and he would have been comparable to nothing better than a stunted tree, bringing forth fruit destined not to ripen. Such a sacrifice of the will is indeed absolutely necessary, not merely to the general purposes of virtue, but to the *specific value and usefulness* of every member of the church of Christ. Do we enquire why professing Christians are often of so little use to their fellow-creatures, or to the cause of their Redeemer—why multitudes of them are found hiding their candle under a bushel—we must reply, that they have never given up *all* for Christ; and therefore, in the very nature of things, can never experience any sufficient qualification for his service. What a blessed change would soon take place in the world, were all who feel *some* love for God, completely given up, in heart and soul, to his righteous disposal! How numerous would be the agents of his benevolence, the messengers of his errands of

mercy! How diligent the labourers in his spiritual harvest! How rapid the *spread* of truth and happiness, in this world of darkness and sorrow!

7. We must not, however, lead the young and tender mind to expect extraordinary interpositions of divine grace, by which the leprosy of the heart shall be cured immediately, and the great conflict between the flesh and the spirit settled *at once*. Like Naaman of old, we must submit to very simple means of healing, and those means must be frequently repeated. Our true wisdom will be found in a close attention to the duty of the day—the hour—the moment. Every touch of the rod of God's providence which brings us into suffering, must be met by a corresponding readiness to submit to the infliction. Every little pointing of the divine finger, to the sacrifice of a wrong desire, or to the performance of an act of duty, must be watched with an observant eye, and followed with implicit obedience. Thus will our love to God put forth its energy on a multitude of small occasions; it will gain new strength by its success in every step of the process; and, when our divine master sees fit to ordain some greater trial of our allegiance, we shall find, to our inexpressible advantage, that we are HIS OWN—resigned to his disposal, and ready for his service. “Whosoever shall do the will of God,” said Jesus to his followers, “the same is *my brother, and my sister, and my mother.*”¹

8. Here it may be well once more to advert to the fact, that the Christian's course of righteousness is inseparably connected with his faith. His obedience

¹ Mark iii, 35.

is the obedience of faith;² he walks “by faith, not by sight;”³ the life which he now lives “in the flesh,” he lives “by the faith of the Son of God,” who “loved” us and “gave himself” for us.⁴ Not only has his original reception of the gospel led to the devotion of his soul to God; but the principles which first impelled him to the Christian race continue to be at work in him, during the whole course of his experience. A daily recurrence to the blood of the covenant as the only ground of his hope,—a constant dependence on the advocacy of the risen Saviour,—an abiding trust in the providential care of that God to whom he has been reconciled—are, under grace, the very sinews of his strength, in the pursuit of heaven and happiness. And not only does he believe in the promises of God; his faith is also fixed on the commandments. Discarding mere expediency, he obeys them and takes the consequence; and he relies, with all simplicity, on the guidance and government of the Holy Spirit. Thus, while faith sustains obedience, and obedience strengthens faith, *love*, which never fails to be mingled with them both, becomes the predominant affection of the soul. Love, faith, and obedience, are in a wonderful manner *interlaced* in the experience of the Christian. The same divine influence which touches our affections in order that we may believe, and enables us to believe in order that we may obey, will also be found to act inversely. It will lead us to obey, that our faith may be thereby increased; and both to obey and believe, that our *love* may be forever fixed on our God and Saviour.

² Rom. xvi, 26.³ 2 Cor. v, 7.⁴ Gal, ii, 20.

On a review of the whole subject, we must call to mind that God manifests his will in the uniform laws of nature, which can be traced only to the *fiat* of infinite power and wisdom ; in the order of providence, in which he deals with mankind on perfectly righteous principles, *apparent* difficulties being only obscure parts of one glorious whole ; and in the law of practice, enacted for the guidance of his rational creatures—that this law is written on the heart, and declared in Scripture ; that it formed a leading part of the Mosaic system, and is both preserved and enlarged under the gospel of Christ—that a perfect subjection to the will of God is the only practical standard of Christianity—that this subjection consists of resignation in suffering and obedience in acting—that these must be grounded, first, on that living faith in Christ, which is inseparably connected with a right state of the affections ; secondly, on a holy decision in surrendering ourselves to God—that such a surrender is prompted by love, and adds vast force to it—that the Christian is thus prepared for his whole course of virtue and piety, and that, by every step which he takes in that course, his love to God is brightened and confirmed.

It is plain, therefore, that an unreserved submission to the will of our Heavenly Father is of the highest importance to the maintenance and growth of that divine affection, without which we can never be qualified for the enjoyment of heaven. Let it, however, be confessed, that this submission is in itself absolutely necessary to the happiness of the saints in glory. Af-

fliction, indeed, can no longer call into exercise their patience and resignation; yet there can be no doubt that a blessed contentment with the stations allotted them in the kingdom of Christ, and a perfect acquiescence in the acts and counsels of Omnipotence, form a part both of their duty and their joy. And although the faith by which they once lived on earth is now lost in vision, yet, since none "hath known the mind of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him," it is certain that this acquiescence must for ever be connected with a childlike reliance on his wisdom and goodness.

Again, it is impossible for us to doubt, that an implicit obedience to the divine commands is essential, in that region of light, both to the peace of every individual, and to the order and harmony of the whole community. In heaven all is tranquillity, because all is in unison with the mind of God, and subject to his righteous government. Watching and waiting for the manifestations of his will, the spirits of the just made perfect, like the angels who bear them company, are ever ready to receive his bidding. Delivered from the shackles of mortality, from all weariness and depression, and from the smallest remnant of an unsubdued will, they find their supreme delight in obeying the laws, and in executing the gracious commissions, of their Father and their King.

SECTION VIII.

ON CONFORMITY WITH THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.

Nothing can be more just and undeniable than Bishop Butler's remark, that the particular affections of "reverence and love" towards "good characters" are "natural to all those who have any degree of real goodness in themselves."¹

History, both ancient and modern, is alas! a legend of vices rather than of virtues; but when its general complexion is relieved by the breaking forth of justice, integrity, disinterestedness, and charity—when an Aristides, a Scipio, a Regulus, and an Alfred, are presented to our view—these particular affections are at once excited; and there are few persons so lost to every right feeling, as not to be sensible of a certain degree both of admiration and attachment towards such characters. But the truth of this remark is still more clearly proved by every man's experience in social life. It is the temperate, the just, the self-denying, and the merciful—it is those who are ever

¹ *Sermon I, on Love to God*, p. 228. For a more extensive development of this principle and its consequences, see Joyce's excellent work on *Love to God*, part II.

ready to sacrifice their own ease and comfort for the benefit of others—who obtain the esteem even of general society; and in the narrower circle of the private family, these are the characters who are sure to attract the largest measures of love. Virtue, indeed, has often been the object of scorn and persecution, both in public and private life; because wicked men cannot bear the light which detects and condemns their own conduct. Yet there is something in the mind of man which compels him to confess her excellence; and no sooner are we ourselves imbued with any measure of her influence, than we feel a corresponding regard for all those who follow her guidance, and obey her laws.

“We own and feel the force of amiable and worthy qualities in our fellow creatures,” says Butler, “and can we be insensible to the contemplation of *perfect* goodness?” Foreible as is this question, experience forbids our giving to it a satisfactory reply; for it is certain that, even among Christian nations, love to God is by no means so predominant a principle, as the known prevalence of regard to human virtue might lead us to expect. While this capital defect in the sentiments and feelings of men can be traced to no other radical cause than our *corruption in the fall*, it is in a peculiar manner promoted by one of the consequences of that corruption—the natural incapacity of the mind to apprehend a spiritual Being. So great is this incapacity, that, notwithstanding the most abundant evidences of his power and benevolence, multitudes, who are by no means destitute of some love for virtue, neglect and forget

him “days without number.” Again, until the true light of the gospel of Christ breaks in upon the soul, men are more likely to be affected by the awful parts of the divine character, and to shrink from the presence of their Judge, than to accept and admire him as a *God of love*.

But how different is the whole train of our feelings, when the religion of Jesus has become influential in the mind! Christianity brings God very near to us. He meets the perception of his reconciled children in every flower that blossoms, in every star that shines, and in every cloud that floats across the sky. They find him in daily, hourly, contact with themselves, in his providential mercies, in his paternal care. Above all, his *holiness* on the one hand, and his *love* on the other, are illustriously displayed to them in the scheme of redemption. In *Christ*, God is revealed in all the beauty and majesty of his moral perfections.

When, through the influence of the Holy Spirit, we *thus* know him, we cannot do otherwise than revere and love him; and, although these affections on our parts fall infinitely short of his claims upon us, they fully confirm the general principle, that moral excellence attracts *love*. They are the legitimate effect, on our minds, of God’s *infinite goodness*.

We may now advert to *a second principle* of much practical importance—that the love which good characters excite in the minds of men, who have “any spark of goodness” in themselves, is always accompanied by a desire to imitate the pattern which they admire and approve. What ingenuous person can find his best affection drawn forth by noble and gen-

crons characters in the history of his country, without feeling some ardent wishes to act on the same principles of virtue and charity? The force of example is felt even in large communities; and goodness, under the divine blessing, is often diffused in society, through the tendency, so common amongst men, to imitate those of their neighbours who are the objects of their regard. The same principle applies with redoubled force to the domestic circle. When we are instructed and comforted from day to day by the good conduct of our dearest friends, it is impossible for us (if our minds be in any degree under a right influence) not to desire—and almost impossible not to *endeavour*—to be of the same mind, the same character.

But it is in religion, that this principle finds its highest application. When God has been brought near to us in the gospel of his Son—when we have been taught to regard and love him as a Being of infinite holiness and benevolence—the Spirit which awakens these affections, never fails to excite in us an earnest desire to become conformed, in our own character, to his moral attributes. This indeed is a test by which we may try our love; for, if such a desire is strange to us, we may rest assured that our affections have never been rightly excited towards him. There is something in the inmost feelings of every true believer, which responds to that awful precept, “Be ye holy; *for I am holy.*”²

God created man in his own image—after his own likeness. Not only did he furnish him with the lamp of reason, and introduce him to the high destinies of

² 1 Pet. i, 16.

eternity, but he formed him upon the pattern of his own character. The soul of the creature was stamped with the moral impress of the Creator. But man is fallen, he has lost the image of his Heavenly Father; through the stratagems of Satan, he is become a sinner and a child of wrath; and now there is no deliverance for him, but through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ.

What then is the great *practical* object of the scheme of redemption, and of that whole process of faith and obedience, which has been described in the preceding section? It is the recovery of man's lost character—his restoration to the likeness of his Creator. Utterly lost as he is to holiness, he has no more power to work out his cure by any strength or wisdom of his own, than has the dead body, mouldering in the grave, to live, arise, and walk. But when he is imbued, by a power beyond his own, with a living faith in God, set free from condemnation through the blood of Jesus, and subjected to the purifying influences of the Holy Spirit—he gradually undergoes a vital change. Enamoured with the beauty of the Holy One of Israel, and panting after a resemblance to his righteous attributes, he bends the whole forces of his soul to the race of holiness; and behold, he becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus. He *puts off* “concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;” he *puts on* “the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”³ Thus is the love of the Christian towards

³ Eph. iv, 22, 24.

that Being, in whom all loveliness dwells, graciously rewarded by a daily increasing resemblance to the highest object of his regard.

But in the midst of our best endeavours to be *followers of God*, and to resemble, in point of moral character, the Author of our being; it is impossible for us to forget the infinite elevation of the unsearchable Creator, above *man*, that worm of the earth, that poor groveller in the dust. Hence it seems to follow, that, in our endeavours to scale the height of assimilation to God, there would be the utmost danger of our being appalled, and of our falling back, in despair, into the depths of our own weakness, were it not that the righteousness of God, is brought home to our familiar perceptions in his *incarnate Son*. “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, *in the face* (or person) of *Jesus Christ*.”⁴

Christ is the image of God, in whom all the moral attributes of the Deity were displayed, and as it were personified; and at the same time he has afforded us a perfect pattern of that unqualified submission to the Father’s will, which belongs to our relation towards God, and without which we can never recover his likeness. When the Son of God quitted his throne of glory, and took upon him the nature of man, he did indeed surrender himself without reserve to the decrees of infinite wisdom and goodness; nor can it be doubted that the sacrifice was prompted by unutterable love towards him who commanded it, as well

⁴ 2 Cor. iv, 6.

as by compassion for our fallen race. Then said he, "Lo I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I *delight* to do thy will, O God."⁵

With this unparalleled act of self-renunciation, his subsequent resignation in suffering the will of God, and faithfulness in doing it, were completely on a level. Subjected as he was, without a murmur, to his Father's designs respecting him, his language in the depth of conflict, and in the immediate prospect of his propitiatory death, was, "not as I will, but as thou wilt." "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." Again, so entirely conformed was he in action, to the will of God, that the words which he spoke were his Father's words, and the works which he wrought, his Father's works.⁶ "My meat," said he, "is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."⁷

While he was thus conformed to the will of his Father, he gloriously fulfilled his own precept, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." He was the Holy One of God, a Lamb without blemish and without spot; wisdom and prudence were in him united with unbending integrity and undaunted courage, and his words were the very truth; his patience and fortitude surmounted every difficulty; he was for ever engaged in acts of beneficence—in labouring for the welfare of the bodies and souls of men; his temper was unruffled as the dove's; he was meek, gentle, forbearing, long-

⁵ Ps. xl, 7, 8.

⁶ John xiv, 10, &c.

⁷ John iv, 34.

suffering, tender-hearted ; magnanimous and zealous in his Father's cause, but ever ready to forgive the insults and injuries which were heaped upon himself ; although infinitely worthy of exaltation, he was "lowly in heart ;" his charity knew no bounds ; his love to God and man was ever-flowing, like the waves of the ocean.

What a precious evidence is it of the loving-kindness of our God, as well as of the truth of our holy religion, that we are thus furnished with an example, in which his whole moral law is embodied for our instruction, and in such a form as powerfully to engage our best affections ! If there is any thing of divine grace in our souls, we cannot fail to love that perfectly lovely one who is thus presented, in a glowing picture, to our notice ; and our affection for him will, in the very nature of things, be accompanied by a cordial desire to follow his example.

Let some ingenuous youth be placed under the care and instruction of an elder brother, with whom he feels a happy freedom, but whose good qualities excite at once his reverence and his love. We shall be sure to find him insensibly moulding himself upon his favorite model. Almost without an intention, he will speak in the same voice, behave in the same manner, and adopt the same sentiments. He will be constantly approaching nearer and nearer to his pattern, in thought, demeanour, conduct, and character. So ought it to be—so will it be, if his faith and love are genuine—with the Christian towards his Saviour. Let all who bear the name of Christ, fix their regards on their glorious Elder Brother, the First-begotten

from the dead, who was crucified for their sins, and lives for their salvation. Let them cultivate their love for him, by taking a frequent view of his perfections; and let this love have its free course in leading them to imitate their model. In constant dependence on the aid of the Holy Spirit, let them humbly endeavour to imbibe his mind, and follow his footsteps. Let them look well to it, that their hearts be conformed to the purity which is in Jesus; and that they be clad in the same garment of gentleness, meekness, charity, and humility.

Now as the Christian character is gradually formed in obedience to the precepts of Jesus, and *after his example*, the image of God is renewed in the soul. Utterly insignificant as he is in himself, man becomes once more conformed to the righteous character of his Creator; the holiness and benevolence of the Deity are again reflected in his demeanour and conduct, as the face of man is reflected in a mirror. “But we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”⁸

It appears, then, *first*, that when there is any spark of goodness in men, their love and regard is naturally attracted by virtuous characters; and that although this principle, *as it respects God*, is grievously hindered by the weakness and corruption of our nature, it is, nevertheless, verified by the experience of every true Christian—*secondly*, that our attachment to persons distinguished by moral excellence, is inseparably

⁸ 2 Cor. iii, 18.

connected with some desire to imitate their example—that the Christian is inspired with an earnest solicitude to be a follower of God himself—that the restoration of men to that image of the Creator, which they have lost through the fall, is the main practical purpose of Christianity—and that this purpose can be accomplished only as they are formed on the model of his incarnate Son.

So far then the argument is clear; but there is a third point to which we must advert in order to complete our view of the subject. *The degree of our love to holy beings, is always in proportion to the degree of our own holiness.*

Just as our relish for the elegancies of a language keeps pace with our proficiency in the knowledge of it—just as the excellence of some well-painted picture, although hidden from the unpractised eye, is at once detected by that of an artist—just as the greatest delight in the charms of nature, is ever felt by those who have been nursed in contemplating them, the mind which is the most exercised in virtue, never fails to be the most alive to its goodness and beauty.

The more any community of men is set free from degrading and vicious practices, the greater will be their esteem for their virtuous members. The more the child is strengthened in his moral principles, the more he will love the parent in whose conduct those principles are displayed.

From these premises, it plainly follows, that precisely in proportion to the Christian's improvement in holiness, will be the increase of his love to a holy God and Saviour. Let the work of sanctification go

forward in our souls, and what will be the blessed consequence? Our sense of the glory and excellence of the divine character will be refined and exalted; our hatred for sin, and our reverence for righteousness, will become determined; and the love which leads us to imitate the Saviour, will grow stronger and stronger as the process of assimilation advances. The more we resemble him and partake of his mind and character, the warmer will be our regard for him, and the closer that bond of union, in which we can say, with the church of old, "my beloved is mine, and I am his."⁹ And in being thus brought nearer to the Son, we are brought nearer to the Father also. Every element of discord and separation between God and his children, is gradually removed; and, as sin disappears, *love* triumphs over all.

It is therefore through the gradual conformation of the character to the moral attributes of the Deity, that our love to God is matured and perfected. But while this love may fairly be regarded as the main qualification for the enjoyments of a better world, let it never be forgotten that an actual resemblance to the purity of the Deity, is in itself indispensable to our admission into heaven. Never can we take possession of the eternal inheritance which Christ has purchased for us with his blood, unless we be restored to that likeness of Jehovah, in which our first parents were created. Without holiness "no man shall see the Lord."¹ "There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh

abomination, or maketh a lie, but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." ²

What tongue can tell, what heart conceive, the joy which is reserved in heaven for those who have here, by the work of grace, been *assimilated* to Jesus Christ? "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." ³ If even in this world, we have been taught to love God because of his moral perfections, and if our love for him has ever been found to increase, as we ourselves have been enabled to advance in holiness, what will be the measure of our love—what, therefore, the fulness of our happiness—when the moral beauty of the Deity shall be revealed to us in all its radiance, while our own capacity for appreciating it is unutterably enlarged! For ever likened to their Saviour, the risen and glorified children of the Lord will experience, in heaven, the perfect blending of love and holiness; and both these will be for ever associated with unclouded joy.

² Rev. xxi, 27.

³ 1 John iii, 2.

SECTION IX.

ON LOVE TOWARDS MAN.

EXPERIENCE affords many proofs that men, being evil, “know how to give good gifts” unto their “children.” The father of a family provides food for his wife and little ones, by the labour of his hands; and is constrained to do so by the gentle yet constant impulse of natural affection. The mother watches with ceaseless care over the couch of her sick infant, and is urged by feelings of a most tender character to soothe its sufferings, even at the cost of her own ease and comfort. Brothers and sisters, relations and friends, are perpetually seen enjoying each other’s company, and assisting one another by a thousand little offices of kindness. In some of these instances, especially in that of the watchful mother, something may be placed to the account of natural instinct; yet we cannot deny, that benevolence has its share of influence in producing these effects; and this quality becomes still more conspicuous when men are found to be willing, as they very generally are, to relieve the distresses of their fellow-men, with whom they have little or no connexion, but that of a common nature. A heathen

could say, *Homo sum, et nihil humani a me alienum puto*.—"I am a man; and I consider nothing belonging to my fellow-men, foreign to my care."

It is impossible to deny the existence of these kindly dispositions in man; and it would be ungrateful to our gracious Creator, to underrate their value. Yet I conceive, that were they analysed under the light of truth, they would be found to yield but little credit to corrupt human nature. No small proportion of selfishness might, after all, be discovered in their *basis*; and whatsoever was found in the combination of a lovelier character, might, perhaps, be traced to the secret working of an influence from above. In the meantime, it is affecting to observe, how soon, under the sway of prejudice, ambition, and covetousness, these amiable tendencies are exchanged, even for *desperate* cruelty. What became of natural affection during the persecutions of the early Christians, when brother delivered up his brother, and father his child, to the most barbarous deaths? Where was the benevolence of our species, when whole nations were wasted, and rivers of blood shed, by the sword of Zengis Khan, or of Napoleon? Of what force is that benevolence in comparison with filthy lucre, among the wretches who tear the unoffending Africans from their homes—press them in multitudes into the noisome holds of their slave-ships—and, at last, sell them into hopeless bondage?

The plain fact is, that the affection of *love*, in the breast of man, will never be regulated on principles of true morality, or be found of a pure and stable character, until it be directed, in the first place, to that glorious Being who is its proper and supreme object. It

is when our love has been taught to flow, in an undivided stream, towards God, that it pursues its course—or rather, that it is sent back from him—with a force unknown before, towards all who stand in the same relation to him as ourselves ; for we are all children of one Father.

Let us picture to ourselves some large family of sons and daughters, who have been cherished, with an impartial regard, by their earthly parents. Should these children make no return for parental kindness but indifference and neglect, it is morally impossible that there should be any stable principle in their friendship for each other ; the bond subsisting among them must be loose and uncertain in the extreme. But should they, on the contrary, be virtuous, the love of every child in the fireside group would flow without restriction, in the first place, towards his parents ; and, in the next place, towards his brothers and sisters, those equal sharers with himself of a father's tenderness and a mother's care. But let us suppose that these fond parents, in addition to the usual offices of love, had made some vast sacrifice, or had undergone incredible fatigue and suffering, for the benefit of all their children—say, for the purpose of redeeming them from slavery. Here would be a new and distinct call on every child for gratitude towards the parents ; and a fresh tie to bind all the children together in love. They all owe their existence, under divine Providence, to the same father and mother ; they are all objects of the same parental love and care ; above all, they have all been redeemed from a cruel bondage, through the same parental *suffering*. Irr-

sistible, therefore, are the feelings which impel them first to love their parents; and next, *through the medium of this filial affection*, to attach themselves to each other.

The claims of our Heavenly Father on our love and gratitude, are incomparably superior to those of any earthly parent; and when these claims are acknowledged and felt, our love to our fellow-men, the common objects with ourselves of his goodness, both in creation and providence, rests on a secure basis; it becomes what it never was before, a *heaven-born* affection. But what vast additional force is imparted to this affection, through the gospel of our Redeemer! When the great truth is impressed on our hearts, that God sent his own Son into the world to save us—even to redeem us, by his death on the cross, from the pains of hell, and from the slavery of sin and Satan—our love cannot fail to flow and abound. We are gently constrained, under a divine influence, first to love the Lord our God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, and next to love that universal family of man, for whom Christ died. “If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.”¹

Again we have seen that those who truly love God, are distinguished by a cordial desire and endeavour to resemble the object of their regard. But there is not one of his moral attributes more clearly placed within the scope of our perception and imitation, than his *love to man*.²

¹ 1 John iv, 11.

² “God is love. Can those who love him, and who ardently desire to resemble him, *refuse to bear the image of his darling*

It appears, therefore, that there is something more than a bare succession—that there is *sequence*, in the sense of cause and effect—in the two great commandments of the law of God. When the lawyer questioned Jesus, saying, “Master, which is the great commandment of the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, THOU SHALT LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR AS THYSELF.”³ What then is the *extent*, and what the *measure*, of this second commandment?

1. *Extent.* The ancient Jews were accustomed, as a people, to dwell alone. Separated as they were both by their civil and religious habits, from the heathen nations which surrounded them, it was not without divine authority, that they looked upon themselves as a select community, the peculiar heritage of the Lord. Hence they were not, in general, prepared to salute any man as their neighbour, or *friend* (as in the Hebrew,) who was not of the commonwealth of Israel; and the command to love their neighbour was, in their view, equivalent to the precept that they should love one another. But the gospel, which broke down the middle wall of partition between the Jews and the Gentiles, has imparted a far wider significance to the term *neighbour*; as is very evident from some of our Lord’s discourses.

attribute, and with all the helps and powerful incentives to mutual affection, remain indifferent to one another?”—*Joyce, Love to God*, 3rd Edit. p. 113.

³ Matt. xxii, 35—39.

The Samaritans were a people quite distinct from the Jews ; they were Cuthites from Chaldæa, who were planted in the territory of the ten tribes, by their victorious enemy, Salmanassar, king of Assyria. Yet we find, from that exquisite parable by which Jesus answered the lawyer's question on the subject before us, that the *good Samaritan* was neighbour to the *Jew* who fell among thieves ; and proved himself to be so, by exercising towards him the offices of Christian charity. And as the term is strictly reciprocal, it of course follows that the Jew also was neighbour to the Samaritan.

Hence it appears, that under the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, all men of every colour and country who fall under our notice, or are within the reach of our influence, must be regarded as our neighbours ; and that it is our duty to love them as we love ourselves. Nor does the mere distance of the party from us, deprive him of this character ; for Christianity is a diffusive religion. Under its influence, *we have to do* with millions whom we have never seen ; and while it in no degree weakens the preeminent claims upon us, of our own countrymen, it supplies us with neighbours, whom it is our duty to serve, in the remotest parts of the habitable globe. When the apostles were commanded to go forth and to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation to every creature under heaven, they were taught, by the very command itself, to regard *every creature under heaven*, as their neighbour and their friend.

But the Samaritans were not only of a different stock from the Jews ; the two nations were at enmity

with each other. Samaritan adversaries hindered the rebuilding of Jerusalem, in the days of Artaxerxes ; and so obstinate was this national dislike, that when Jesus and his disciples, many hundred years afterwards, were passing through a Samaritan village, even the opportunity to obtain food was refused them, because their faces were set “to go to Jerusalem.”⁴ Nor was the spirit of the Jews towards this people in any degree less hostile;—“The Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans.”⁵ It appears then, that the enmity of any persons, or of any nations of men, against ourselves, has no effect in removing them from the class of our *neighbours* ; we must still love them, and treat them as our friends. In short, the term “neighbour,” in this comprehensive law, extends, under the gospel, without any kind of exception, to *the whole family of our fellow-men*. “The Lord,” said the apostle to the Thessalonians, “make you to increase and abound in love one towards another, and towards ALL MEN.”⁶

⁴ Luke ix, 53.⁵ John iv, 9.⁶ 1 Thess. iii, 12.

⁶ That *war* is an anti-Christian practice is a position which few serious persons will refuse to admit as true ; and a candid examination of facts can scarcely fail to extort the further confession, that sinful as it is in its own nature, it is no solitary evil, but prolific of innumerable transgressions against the divine law. It brings into play all the worst passions of our nature ; it is followed by fraud, robbery, rapine, and unbridled licentiousness and cruelty. Above all, it tramples on the sacredness of human life, mocks at the doctrine of man’s immortality, and is full of *murder*.

Can any one deny that our Lord’s plain precept, *love your enemies*, virtually abolishes the warfare of the world, both for individuals and for nations ? Is it possible for us, to *love* our enemies and to *destroy* them simultaneously ?

May the happy day speedily arrive, when Christians will univer-

2. The *measure* of the love which the Christian is required to bear towards his neighbour, is the love which he lawfully entertains for himself—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as *thyself*." Although the love of self is miserably perverted and exaggerated in the fall, so that, in point of fact, it has become *self-worship*, there can be no doubt that this affection, within its true limits, belongs to man's original nature, and forms an important part of his mental constitution. It is the affection which leads us, by a never-failing impulse, to seek our own safety and happiness; and, when rectified by divine grace, and applied *in a right direction*, it becomes a powerful instrument for our good. Now the Christian's love for his neighbour ought to be precisely the same *in character* as his love for himself—strong, constant, well-principled, and effective. It ought also to be the same *in degree*; so far as to lead us to do unto others, as we would have them, under the same circumstances, do unto ourselves.

sally withdraw from all participation in this tremendous sin! "We no longer take up the sword against any nation," said Origen to Celsus, "neither do we learn any more to make war. We have become for the sake of Jesus, the *children of peace*." Again he says, "by such means (that is by our prayers) we fight for our king abundantly; but we *go not with him to war*, even though he urge us *ἀλλ' ἐπείγῃ*."—Lib. v, 33, Ed. Ben. i, 602; lib. viii, 73, Ed. Ben. i, 797. "Hitherto I have fought for thee," said Martin, a converted soldier, to the Emperor Julian, "permit me now to fight for my God. Let those who are about to engage in battle accept thy donative. I am the soldier of Christ; for me, the *combat is unlawful*." *Sulpit. Sev. de Vita B. Martin*, Ed. Amst. p. 445.

Observe the courses of the planets round the sun. They cannot fly off into endless space—the *centripetal* force prevents them; they cannot fall to the sun in the centre, and perish in his flames—the *centrifugal* force preserves them at their right distance. Under that almighty hand by which they were first adjusted, the two forces, in their opposite and equal operation, are the means of preserving the whole solar system in its admirable order. Just so would it be in the mutual relations of men, were the love of self *matched* as it ought to be, by pure benevolence. The affection which seeks the centre of self, and that which shuns it for the benefit of others, would balance and counteract each other; and the blessed result, under the grace of God, would be the peace and harmony of our whole species.

3. A high sense of honour, even in men of a worldly character, ought by no means to be under-valued; for it is right in itself, and greatly promotes the happiness of mankind. Yet how often do we find persons, who are by no means destitute of this quality, working abundance of ill to their neighbours! Under the influence of their respective passions, the duellist, the gamester, and the sensualist—although they may all *scorn* what they deem a breach of honour—have little hesitation in inflicting injuries on their fellow-creatures, which are utterly opposed to *immutable justice*. Hence we may perceive the true force of the apostle's doctrine, that all the laws which forbid our injuring other men, are briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." "Love," he adds, "worketh no ill to his neighbour;"

therefore “love is the fulfilling of the law.”⁹ If this love had always prevailed among professing Christians, where would have been the sword of the crusader? Where the African slave-trade? Where that odious system which permits to man a property in his fellow, and converts rational beings into marketable chattles?

Love, indeed, imparts both eyes and wings to justice. It is when our depraved affections are rectified, that we take an enlightened view of the relations of our fellow-men towards ourselves, and of the claims on our *justice*, which those relations involve. Again, it is love which makes us *swift* to shun the evil which justice forbids, and to do the good which she demands. At the same time, it cannot be denied, that under the *softening* touches of religion, charity and mercy are sometimes found to be easier to frail man than the *hardier virtue of strict integrity*. This is a point of danger which requires a peculiar guard, and which is too often neglected, to the great loss and injury of the cause of Christ. Let it ever be remembered, that the unbending maintenance of the *rule of right* towards our fellow-men, is the *first* and *most indispensable* result of that holy law—“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”

4. When we are conscious that we have fulfilled the claims of justice, our charity has free scope; and if we abide under the influence of divine grace, it will soon be found exerting itself in every direction.

Were we in temporal distress ourselves—sick, impoverished, afflicted, or imprisoned—we should certainly desire the sympathy and assistance of our fellow-men;

⁹ Rom. xiii, 9, 10.

and, therefore, by the royal law of love, we are bound to extend our pity and help, as far as our means and opportunities permit, to all who need it. If we neglect these obvious duties, vain are our professions of faith and love. "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works, can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?"¹ Again, "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"²

All men are our brethren by creation; and we cannot doubt that to all men these offices of kindness are due, as occasion offers. Yet it may not be wholly useless to observe, that in relieving the temporal distresses of the poor, Christian love will lead us to aim at their *substantial and permanent* welfare. While it may even check the hand of indiscriminate alms-giving, it will teach us to inquire into the *sources* of poverty, and *there* to apply our remedies. Above all, we shall endeavour to set those principles at work in their minds, by which they may be induced to feel their own independence, and help themselves.

In the meantime, those who are suffering from peculiar calamities will claim a corresponding care. In these matters we may find an admirable pattern in a very ancient philanthropist; "When the ear heard me," said Job, "then it blessed me; and when the eye

¹ James, ii, 14—16.

² 1 John iii, 17.

saw me, it gave witness to me; because I delivered the poor that cried, and the *fatherless*, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was *ready to perish* came upon me; and I caused the *widow's* heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness and it clothed me, my *judgment* was as a robe and a diadem; I was eyes to the *blind*; and feet was I to the *lame*. I was a *father to the poor* (the stable protector of their true interests;) and the *cause which I knew not I searched out.*"³

5. But the law of love to our neighbour, and its corresponding "golden rule," are far indeed from being restricted, as to their object, to the poor and distressed among men. They teach us to fulfil our Christian duties towards the king upon his throne; towards "magistrates who are sent by him;" towards all who have a just authority over us; towards our equals and associates; towards those who are placed under our care, or are engaged in our service—in fact, *through the whole train of our relations in life*. Under the blessed influence of love, it is the office of *justice*, to "render unto *all* their dues," and to refrain from injuring any man in word, thought, or deed; and it is that of *charity*, to impart to others as much happiness as it is in our power to bestow. Bitterness, wrath, envy, and *detraction*, must all disappear under the melting ray of the law of love; and in their place, must spring up kindness, universal good will, tenderness of spirit, forbearance, the willing preference of others, and Christian courtesy. Divine love alone will render us good citizens of this evil

³ Job xxix, 11—16.

world, and polish us into true gentlemen. “Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, (or *love*,) it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly; seeketh not her own; is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things; believeth all things; hopeth all things; endureth all things..... And now abideth, faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is CHARITY.”⁴

6. Were we to inquire of the Christian, which of all his privileges he most dearly prizes, he would not fail to answer—The knowledge of *divine truth*; and the blessed hope of everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. How, then, can he love his neighbour as himself—how can he do to others as he would that others (under like circumstances) should do to him—without endeavouring to communicate to his fellow-men these dearest of blessings? If Christian charity constrains him to be ever on the watch for the temporal benefit of his fellow-men, how much more for their spiritual and eternal welfare!

The ministry of the gospel of Christ is preeminently a work of *love*. Under the influence of this pure affection towards God and man, the first preachers of Christianity were brought into sympathy with the condition of the people; and they were made willing to undergo every description of privation and suffering, and even to offer up their lives, in order to make

⁴ 1 Cor xiii, 3—13.

known to sinners, the crucified and risen Saviour. "Neither count I my life dear unto myself," said the apostle Paul, "so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."⁵ There can be no doubt that the same blessed motive was powerfully at work in the mind of an Eliot, a Brainerd, a Schwartz, and a Martin; and can never fail to characterise every true-hearted minister of the gospel, both at home and abroad. Would that an increasing multitude of servants, actuated by no other motive than that of love, and depending on no other influence than that of the Holy Spirit, might be raised up to publish the truth of God, in every part of this dark and degenerate world! Would that there were a response, in the hearts of tens of thousands, to the call of Jesus and his Spirit, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature!"⁶

Yet it must not be forgotten that while this call is in its nature select and specific, the work of diffusing a knowledge of the truth is by no means restricted to the ministers of the gospel. The harvest field of the world is large and various; giving scope for labour of many different kinds; and there is not a Christian upon earth who ought not, in some way or other, to promote the common cause. The distribution of the Bible, the scriptural education of the poor, the diffusion of religious tracts, are means of extending the kingdom of Christ, to which no man can fairly object, and which most men have some opportunity of promoting. Other means, suited to the various

⁵ Acts xx, 24.

⁶ Mark xvi, 15.

modifications of our opinions and feelings, abound on every side; so that if there be a heart for the work, some way to perform it is sure to offer itself.

“Sow in the morn thy seed,
At eve hold not thy hand,
To doubt and fear give thou no heed—
Broad cast it round the land!”

MONTGOMERY.

In addition to efforts of this description, services of a more directly personal nature, are frequently required of us, for the benefit of our fellow-men. For every Christian has his own circle of influence, and ought to be a centre for the diffusion of light to all whom that circle comprises. Were we more strongly actuated by divine love, more willing to take up our cross and confess the Lord who bought us, how often would the words of friendly admonition, of timely warning, or of warm encouragement, flow from our lips! While a holy discretion would still be carefully cherished, how conspicuously would our zeal for the salvation of souls overcome the withering influence of the fear of man! Above all, how watchful should we be that our example might always *tell* on the side of truth and righteousness—that our whole demeanour and conduct might utter the language—come and have fellowship with us, “because our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ!”⁷

In holding up our love for ourselves as the general standard of our love to our neighbour, the divine law

⁷ 1 John i, 3.

by no means requires us to regard all men *equally*. It is rather intended, as I conceive, to enforce the principle so clearly unfolded in the “golden rule;” and to teach us that we should *so feel* and behave towards every man, as we would have him feel and behave towards ourselves, were the position of the two parties *reversed*. Hence the degree of our love for our fellow-men may lawfully vary: and it ought in fact, precisely to correspond with the nature and character of their *relations* towards us.

I am living, it may be, in a certain town, and I feel a sincere regard for all its inhabitants; but there are my father, my mother, my brothers, and my sisters! These are bound to me by a far closer tie, than the rest of my fellow-citizens, and they are objects of a much warmer and nearer affection. Who can wonder then that the followers of our Lord Jesus Christ—the members of that flock and family which he has purchased with his own blood—are, with a *peculiar* emphasis, commanded to *love one another*?

“ The kindred links of life are bright,
Yet not so bright as those
In which Christ’s favour’d friends unite,
And each on each repose.
Where all the hearts in union cling,
With him, the centre and the spring.”

ANON.

I have already endeavoured to shew that our love to our fellow-men, if of the right quality, is inseparably connected with the blessings which we derive, in union with them, from the same God and Father. We love them all as our brethren by creation—the

common objects with ourselves, of the tender mercies of Jehovah, and even of his redeeming love. But true Christians are the children of God by adoption; they are a chosen generation, a peculiar people; theirs is the treasure of saving grace in this world; theirs the hope of unfading happiness and glory in the world to come. Just in proportion therefore to the preeminence of the favours which they are receiving at the hands of their Father, and their Redeemer, must be the preeminence of that love which draws and binds them one to another.

The precepts of our Saviour and his apostles on this subject are numerous and clear. “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”⁸ “Be kindly affectioned one to another in brotherly love, in honour preferring one another.”⁹ “Seeing ye have purified yourselves, in obeying the truth, through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.”¹ “Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God; and every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God . . . God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.”²

It would seem that the apostle John’s love for his brethren was in proportion to that especial affection with which he was himself loved of his Master; and it is said, that in the extremity of his old age, his public addresses to the churches were all reduced to

⁸ John xiii, 34, 35.⁹ Rom. xii, 10.¹ Pet. i, 22.² 1 John iv, 7, 16.

one—"Little children, love one another." But it is not merely by the frequent repetition of such precepts, that we are taught the *preeminence* of that love which Christians are required to exercise towards each other. The Scriptures have affixed to it its peculiar standard, and while we are commanded to love all mankind as we do ourselves; we are enjoined to love our Christian brethren after a still higher measure—even as *Christ hath loved us*. "This is my commandment," said Jesus to his disciples, "that ye love one another, *as I have loved you*." ³ "Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children, and walk in love, *as Christ also hath loved us and hath given himself for us*." ⁴

"As we have therefore opportunity," said the apostle Paul, "let us do good unto all men, *especially unto them who are of the household of faith*." ⁵ These indeed have a peculiar claim upon us, not only for sympathy and kindly affection, but for the willing sacrifices of an unwearied benevolence. It is a remarkable circumstance, that acts of kindness to the brethren of Christ—that is, to the living members of his church—are mentioned as the *test* of that love to Christ himself, by which we must all be appreciated in the day of judgment—"Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it UNTO ME." ⁶

This doctrine may serve to shew us how *great* are the sacrifices which we ought to be willing to make for the benefit of our fellow-believers. "Hereby perceive we the love of (Christ,) because he laid down

³ John xv, 12; *comp.* xiii, 34.

⁵ Gal. vi, 10.

⁴ Eph. v, 1, 2.

⁶ Matt. xxv, 40.

his life for us ; and we ought to *lay down our lives* for the brethren.”⁷

Yet the same principle applies to the smallest offices of Christian kindness ; “He that receiveth you,” said our Saviour, “receiveth *me*, and he that receiveth me, *receiveth him that sent me . . .* And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the *name of a disciple*, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.”⁸ From this passage we may derive an important hint, that as the minor duties of Christian kindness are due to all men among whom our lot is cast, so they ought to be observed, with a *peculiar nicety of feeling*, towards our brethren and sisters in the fellowship of the gospel.

Christianity is distinguished by nothing more strikingly than by the force and tenderness of its sympathies ; and those who are united to the same Holy Head, ought surely to be ever ready, both to weep and to rejoice in unison. If forbearance, gentleness, and courtesy, are due to all men, how plainly ought they to mark our conduct towards those who are of the household of faith ! If that charity, which shuns all unseemly behaviour, and is ever ready to look upon others with a favourable eye, must be exercised towards our neighbours *generally*, how ought it to live and abound towards the Lord’s flock and family ! If the tongue of detraction is unlawful, even when aimed against his enemies, how shameful does it become when it inflicts an injury on a Christian brother or sister !

⁷ 1 John iii, 16.

⁸ Matt. x, 40—42.

It appears that every good deed done to a disciple, in the name of a disciple, is graciously recorded in our favour, as if it were done to Christ. And equally certain is it, that every injury which we inflict on a fellow-believer in Jesus, knowing him to be such, is an offence pointed against Jesus himself. What need, then, have Christians to exert a holy care and watchfulness, that no jarring elements of discord interrupt their harmony; that they entertain no hard thoughts of their brethren; and that they be subject one to another in love! “If there be, therefore, any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man at his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, &c.”⁹

Nor are the good offices due from us to our fellow-believers by any means confined to matters of an outward nature; for Christians are called upon to be helpers one of another in their spiritual course. They must, individually, endeavour to build up their brethren in that holy faith which was “once delivered to the saints;” they must provoke to love and to good works; by joint and reciprocal efforts, the whole church must “edify itself in love.” How often are the disciples of Jesus cheered on their way, by the

⁹ Phil. ii, 1—5.

help and encouragement which they derive from each other; how often do they find, to their joy and comfort, that as "iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend!"¹ And what ought to be our conduct towards those who love the Lord Jesus, but are nevertheless overcome, for a season, by the enemy of their souls? "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. *Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.*"²

There was once a people consisting of six hundred thousand men, besides women and children, who had long been groaning, in a land foreign to their forefathers, under the oppression of one of the worst of tyrants. But having been chosen of God as his own peculiar family, they were delivered from all their thralldom by a miraculous interposition of his power. A dry path was made for them through the deeps of an extensive sea; and while their enemies who pursued them perished in the waves, they soon found themselves in safety in a vast wilderness which lay on the other side. Through this wilderness it was ordained that they should pass, before they could arrive at a fruitful and delightsome land, which was promised them for their inheritance; but in the meantime, they were provided with a wise and benevolent commander, with daily bread from heaven, with pure water from the bosom of rocks, and

¹ Prov. xxvii, 17.

² Gal. vi. 1, 2.

with the sure guidance of a divine messenger, who went before them in a cloud by day, and in a pillar of fire by night.

Alas, for this people!—with the exception of a few faithful ones, they rebelled against God, and their carcasses fell in the wilderness. But had they continued in their uprightness, how fervently would they have loved the Lord, whose daily mercies they so richly experienced; and how closely would their love for each other have been cemented by UNION! The grounds of that union were strong and palpable indeed. They all worshipped the same God, they had all been delivered from the same bondage, and had made their escape by the same path through the waters; they all served the same captain, were all fed and refreshed by the same miraculous supplies, were all guided in their march by the same angel of the covenant; they all contended against the same enemies; and, animated with one design, they were all pressing forward towards the same happy country. How could they do otherwise than confess their bond of union, and cleave to one another in love? To suppose them falling out by the way, merely because the twelve tribes of which they were composed, bore different names and lodged in different parts of the encampment, is to suppose a hideous anomaly—an unaccountable departure, both from reason and rectitude.

This picture affords no unfair representation of the Christian church, which consists of *all under every name who are brought to “repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

They are the chosen and adopted children of one Father; living worshippers of one God; delivered by one miraculous power, from the bondage of sin and Satan; led into safety by one consecrated path; partakers of one heavenly bread; refreshed by one gladdening stream of the waters of life; followers of one all-conquering captain; guided by one divine light; animated by one blessed hope; in pursuit of one holy and glorious inheritance. Above all, they are actually baptized by one spirit into one body. Theirs therefore is the blessed privilege not only of union, but *unity*. If we find such persons disputing and contending with each other, because they are ranged under different names, and occupy for a season, distinct parts of a vast and varied encampment, we can only say, "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph."³

There are certain grand features of scriptural truth so important, that no man can reject them but at the peril of his soul, and so clear, that no man can fairly read his Bible and not acknowledge them. There are other points of minor consequence, respecting which the evidences of Scripture are far more doubtful, and sometimes appear to be of almost equal strength, on either side. It is not surprising therefore that on these points, there should exist, among true Christians, a diversity of opinion; and this diversity may be permitted and *overruled* of the Lord, for wise and worthy purposes. May we not therefore adopt,

³ 2 Sam. i, 20.

as our motto, an old and wise saying—"In essentials *unity*; in non-essentials, *liberty*; in all things, *charity*?"⁴

The differences of opinion on secondary points of doctrine, and also of modes of worship and church government, existing among true Christians, are sometimes mentioned as one of the weapons of the infidel; *but they are a weapon not worth his using*. Although these diversities may in part arise from the ignorance and infirmity of man, it is not by them that the church of Christ is *disfigured* in the sight of its divine Master; but by the lingering remnants of pride, prejudice, and passion, in the individuals and classes of men, of whom it is composed.⁵

When the temple of Solomon was to be erected,

⁴ The celebrated John Locke, thus addresses himself to two female friends who were of a different religious denomination from himself, but in whose society he had felt "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." "The more there is of this (unity) *in the life*, the less we need inquire of what nation, country, party, or persuasion our friends are, for our own knowledge is more sure to us than another's. Now the God of all grace grant that you may hold fast that *rare grace of charity*, and choose that *unbiassed and unbounded love*, which if it decay not, will spring up mightily as the waters of the sanctuary, higher and higher, until you, with the universal church, swim together in the ocean of divine love."—*Manuscript Letter*.

⁵ Some admirable remarks on this subject will be found in *Joyce, on Love to God*, appendix II, 3rd edit. p. 310. They are entitled, "Remarks on the Common Errors of Theological Controversy, &c." When speaking of party spirit in religion, Bishop Butler says, "It may be expected from all people, how much soever they are in earnest about their respective peculiarities, that humanity and common goodwill to their fellow-creatures, should moderate and restrain that *wretched spirit*." *Sermon on Love to our Neighbour*, xii.

all the materials were in the first instance hewn into shape and polished for their uses; and when afterwards they had been put together, without a sound in the house of any tool of iron, beautiful was the harmony which resulted from their *fitness*. So would it be with Christians, were they fully subject to that divine power which would level their pride, abate their prejudice, and polish down their roughness. Their junction with him, on whom depends the security of the whole building, and their union with each other, would be more *complete* than it is at present. The holy temple would arise and spread in its true beauty and harmony; and the inextinguishable flame of *love*, would diffuse a generous glow of warmth and brightness, through the whole sacred edifice.⁶

⁶ Convinced as I am of the truth of these remarks, I am far from undervaluing *unanimity* among Christians, even on those points in religion, which can by no means be regarded as essential to salvation. I believe that an unreserved submission to the power of God's Spirit, would to a great extent lead us into *unanimity* as well as *good fellowship*; for it is declared that the Comforter will guide the children of the Lord into "all truth." The same end would be greatly promoted by an earnest endeavour on the part of every Christian, to obtain a *comprehensive* and *impartial* view of divine truth. We must not sit down to the study of Scripture, with minds biassed and pre-occupied by our own notions. In dependence on the Spirit by whom they were inspired, we must seek to be taught by the "prophets and apostles;" and we must take whatsoever they say, *as it comes*.

A partial view of truth is a first step to the worst of heresies. "Il y en a plusieurs," says Pascal, "qui errent d'autant plus dangereusement, qu'ils prennent une vérité pour le principe de leur erreur. Leur faute n'est pas de suivre une fausseté; mais de suivre une vérité, à l'exclusion d'une autre. Il y a un grand nombre de vérités, et de foi et de morale, qui *semblent* répugnantes et contraires, et qui subsistent toutes dans un ordre admirable. La source

It appears then, *first*, that the benevolence of man towards man, can never assume a stable character until his love is primarily fixed on God; and that, therefore, in the two commandments, “Thou shalt love God,” “Thou shalt love thy neighbour,” there is not only succession, but *sequence*—that the *extent* of this commandment comprehends all mankind, and that the *measure* of it is the legitimate love of self—that we must shew our obedience to it by rendering to all their dues; by ministering to the wants of the poor and afflicted; by the kindly tempers of universal charity; and above all, by labouring for the spiritual benefit of our fellow-men.

Secondly, That our fellow Christians stand in a peculiar relation towards us, and have therefore peculiar claims on our affections—that in proportion to the preeminence of God’s favours to his church, ought to be the preeminence of our love for its members—that deeds of kindness done to them are graciously accepted of the Lord, as done to himself—

de toutes les hérésies, est l’exclusion de quelques-unes de ces vérités . . . C’est pourquoi le plus court moyen pour empêcher les hérésies, est d’instruire de toutes les vérités; et le plus sur moyen de les réfuter, est de les déclarer toutes.” “There are many persons who err so much the more dangerously because they take a truth, as the principle of their error. Their fault is, not that they follow a falsehood but that they follow one truth to the exclusion of another. There are a number of truths, both doctrinal and moral, which *appear* repugnant and contrary, but which, nevertheless, all subsist in an admirable order. The source of all heresies is the exclusion of *some* of these truths. Hence it appears that the shortest way to *prevent* heresies, is to instruct in *all* the truths of religion, and the surest method of *refuting* heresies, is to declare all these truths.—*Pensées*, xxviii.

that Christians ought ever to be on the watch to exercise mutual forbearance, meekness, and charity, and to build up one another in their most holy faith—that their love is connected with *union* of experience, purpose, belief, and hope; and finally, that notwithstanding every diversity on minor points, it is at once the duty and happiness of all who hold the Head, to “dwell together in *unity*.”

Now as love to God leads to the love of our neighbour, as to a necessary consequence, so the latter reacts, with incalculable force, on our love to God. Such, as we have already seen, is the genuine operation of obedience to *all* the commandments of the Lord; for love prompts to obedience, and obedience increases love. But the remark applies with pre-eminent force to this branch of the divine law. The habitual and diligent exercise of the duties of benevolence has a vast effect in softening and widening the human mind. Thus it enlarges our capacity of loving all who are the proper objects of this affection, and especially Him who is its *supreme object*. The stream which flows first towards our Heavenly Father, and from him is diffused over his sentient creatures, according to their respective relations to us, can never lose its original tendency. It only gathers strength and abundance in its course, and while it never fails to encircle its subordinate objects, it begins and ends with God himself. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his *love is perfected in us*.⁷

⁷ 1 John iv, 12.

⁷ “O Almighty God, inspire us with this divine principle (of love.) Kill in us all the seeds of envy and ill will, and help us, by

Thus it appears, that obedience to the second great commandment, is one chosen means of confirming that pure love to God, without which our souls can never truly incline towards heaven, or be fitted for a participation in its pleasures. Yet there can be no doubt that the habit of benevolence and brotherly love, forms *in itself* an essential constituent of the joys of eternity. “*Charity never faileth.*”

“ Then constant faith and holy hope shall die,
One lost in certainty, and one in joy ;
Whilst thou more happy power, fair charity,
Triumphant sister, greatest of the three,
Thy office and thy nature still the same,
Lasting thy lamp, and unconsumed thy flame,
Shalt still survive—
Shalt stand before the host of heaven confest,
For ever blessing, and for ever blest.”

PRIOR.

Heaven is a place of perfect rest from sin, labour, and sorrow ; but we can find no authority in Scripture, for picturing it to ourselves as a region of *indolent repose*. On the contrary, we have every reason to believe that the more our faculties are improved, the more it will be our delight to *employ* them. Since the angels who never fell are “ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of sal-

cultivating within ourselves the love of our neighbour, to improve in the love of thee. Thou hast placed us in various kindreds, friendships, and relations, as the school of discipline for our affections ; help us, by the due exercise of them, to improve to perfection, until all partial affection be lost in that *entire universal one* ; and thou O God, be ALL IN ALL.”—*Bishop Butler's Prayer at the end of Sermon on Love to our Neighbour.*

vation,"⁸ may we not believe that many an errand and office of mercy awaits the "spirits of the just made perfect?" Can it be doubted that *man*, when finally delivered from the weakness of the flesh, and from every spot of sin, while all his mental powers are renewed with heavenly vigour, will become a powerful instrument, in the divine hand, for promoting the glory of his Maker, and the welfare of the rational universe?

But whatever may be the truth on this subject, it is certain, that as the condition of God's people is social on earth, so also it is social in heaven—affording a boundless scope for the play of our best affections. This seems to be an inevitable inference from the nature of that moral discipline which the Creator has here allotted to us; for the present life, with all its varied relations, is a school for the affections; and it is as we are taught of the Lord to love him with all the heart, and to love our neighbour as ourselves, that we are ripened for eternity. Again, it is the peculiar tendency of the gospel of Christ to draw forth and keep in action, all the generous and tender sympathies of our nature; and what can be the *end* of this tendency but our becoming qualified for a world of love? But on this point the Scriptures are decisive; for they plainly represent the glorified children of the Lord as a people, a church, an assembly.⁹ "The spirits of the just made perfect," redeemed by the precious blood of Christ out "of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues," are no insulated

⁸ Heb. i, 14

⁹ Heb. xii, 22, 23; Rev. v, 7—14; vii, 9—17.

beings, living individually in solitary independence. They are a united band—a vast association of minds in full accordance; all partaking of the same salvation, all serving the same Lord, all engaged in the same song of thanksgiving and praise.

When Moses and Elias came together to minister to the Lord Jesus on the mount,¹ a proof was given that the spirits of the departed are known to each other. The same truth may be elicited from many of our Lord's discourses. When he spoke of Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, and described the conversation between the rich man in torments and Abraham in heaven;² when he promised that his followers, in the regeneration, should be assessors of his throne, guests at his table, and judges of the twelve tribes of Israel;³ when he declared that many should come from the east and west, and should sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," in heavenly places; while the Jews, rejected because of their unbelief, should "*see*" those patriarchs, "*with all the prophets*," in the kingdom of God;⁴ when he represented himself, at the day of judgment, as appealing to those on whom he pronounces sentence, both as to their recollection of their past lives, and as to their knowledge of his brethren then assembled before him,⁵—he evidently gave *his sanction* to the commonly-received doctrine, that in another world we shall remember the associations which we have formed on earth, and *shall perceive and recognise one another*.

¹ Matt. xvii, 3.

² Luke xvi, 22—31.

³ Matt. xix, 28; Luke xxii, 30.

⁴ Luke xiii, 28.

⁵ Matt. xxv, 31—46.

In like manner the apostle Paul alludes to this doctrine, not as a matter liable to be questioned, but as a truth admitted and understood by those to whom he addressed himself. When he spoke of presenting his converts “as a chaste virgin to Christ,”⁶ and declared that they would be his “joy” and “crown of rejoicing, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming”⁷—when he said to the Corinthians, “knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall *present us with you*”⁸—he was looking forward to the day when he should meet his brethren again before the throne of God, and when the connexion which he had maintained with them on earth, should be perfected in celestial mansions.

Our Lord’s promise to the thief on the cross was, “To-day thou shalt be *with me* in paradise;” dying Stephen cried, “*Lord Jesus* receive my spirit;” and with Paul, to die, was “to depart and *to be with Christ.*”⁹ “I go to prepare a place for you,” said Jesus to his disciples; “and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that *where I am there ye may be also.*”¹ Thus it appears that both immediately after death, and when their glory shall have been consummated by the resurrection, it will be the happiness of the Lord’s children to find themselves in the immediate presence of Jesus, in intimate and holy communion with their glorified Saviour and King. In heaven we shall see

⁶ 2 Cor. xi, 2.⁷ 1 Thess. ii, 19, 20.⁸ 2 Cor. iv, 14.⁹ Phil. i, 23.¹ John xiv, 2, 3; *comp.* 1 Thess. iv, 16, 17.

Jesus as he is, and know him “even as we are known;” and it must surely be regarded as a necessary consequence, that we shall see and know our brethren, who are all partakers of the same privilege—all gathered to the same centre.

The rending asunder of those tender ties which here bind us together in many a happy relationship, is the most sorrowful accompaniment of death; but let us not be discouraged, for our Redeemer has secured for us a perfect victory over this “last enemy.” For those who follow him, death will be abolished, and all its bitter consequences reversed; every sorrow which it now occasions them will be turned into joy! Christians, therefore, as the apostle assures us, must not sorrow for the loss of their friends, as others do “which have no hope; for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them which *sleep in Jesus* will God bring with him.”² For a season, indeed, we are deprived of their cherished society; but we shall see them again, we shall behold their faces in glory—unspeakably blessed will be our reunion with them in that region of light and love, where friends are no more parted!

Nor will our love, in that better world, be restricted to those whom we have known on earth. It will extend, as we have every reason to believe, to the wise, the just, and the good, of every generation; and even to the several ranks and orders of angelic beings; for all these belong to the same community; they are all inhabitants of the same celestial city.

² 1 Thess. iv, 13, 14.

While the varied members of that blessed and holy family maintain a perfect harmony of design and feeling, and are all employed in worshipping their God and Saviour, they cannot but gloriously realise their ONENESS in the Lord; and they will be ONE in Him, to all eternity.

CONCLUSION.

It may possibly serve a useful purpose, if we concentrate the whole subject which we have now been discussing, in a few succinct propositions.

1. The main characteristic of those happy beings, who dwell in heaven under the immediate government of God our Saviour, is love towards the Supreme Being; and this love is absolutely essential, both to their employments and their joys. On the contrary, the principal feature in the character of fallen man, is the absence of this love. Hence it follows, that before he can enter heaven, the affections of man must be changed—he must be born again of the Spirit.

2. The grand appointed instrument through which this change is effected, is the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, in which are revealed to us the mercies of God, for the restoration and final happiness of man. The gospel is “the power of God unto salvation.”

3. It is the nature of all passive impressions on the mind of man, to become weaker as they are repeated; and this decay can be counteracted only by the formation of active principles. This truth applies to all our affections, and, amongst others, to that pure affection—love towards God; which will cer-

tainly wither in the soul, unless it be cultivated and carried forward into action. That divine grace by which our love to God is maintained, operates through this peculiar law of our nature; by the motive of love, it leads the soul into various acts; and by these acts, our love is increased and confirmed.

4. One of the principal of them is, the contemplation of the Supreme Being. We ought to contemplate him, with humble gratitude, as our Father by creation; as the bounteous Giver of all our faculties on the one hand, and of the various provisions of nature on the other, by which those faculties are suited; as the Supreme Conductor of the chain of events, for the ultimate good and happiness of his obedient children; and, above all, as the Author of *redemption*.

5. In the scheme of redemption, the Deity displays himself to us as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and the distinctive offices of these three, call for distinctive exertions, on our part, of heartfelt gratitude and affection. The more we reflect on the mercies of the Father, of the Son, and of the Spirit, so gloriously made manifest for the salvation of mankind, the more ardently shall we love the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—*one God blessed for ever*.

6. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." The incarnation of the *Son of God*, and the sacrifice made for sin upon the cross, is the *centre* of the whole mighty scheme, ordained for the deliverance and happiness of man. To this point therefore, above all others, ought our contemplation to be directed, that we may be constrained, by a view of

such unparalleled mercy, to love the Lord *entirely and for ever*.

7. A second act of the soul, fraught with a similar tendency, is, *communion with God*. We commune with the LORD, because we love him; and the converse which we are permitted to hold with him, in our solitary hours, in our family circles, in public worship, and during the whole course of our daily walk—while we pour forth our mind to him, and receive the impressions of his mind in return—is a sure means of our being *taught* to love him more and more.

8. A third act of the soul, induced by love, and essential to its maintenance, is the surrender of ourselves without reserve to God. This surrender, which is inseparably connected with living, heartfelt faith, leads to resignation in suffering the will of God, and to obedience in doing it; and by every fresh exertion, either of resignation or obedience, our love to him is enhanced and strengthened.

9. As Christians, we are bound to love God, not merely because of the benefits bestowed upon ourselves, but because of his intrinsic moral perfections, so clearly displayed to us in the gospel; and if our love for him be sincere, it will excite in us an ardent desire to become *like him* in character. The restoration of fallen man to the image of his Creator, is the great practical purpose of the religion of Jesus—a purpose which can be accomplished only as we follow the example of Jesus himself. Now the greater advances we make in holiness, the livelier will be our sense of the “beauty” of Jehovah; the more we are

assimilated to Christ, the nearer will be our union with the Father and with the Son.

10. The love of our neighbour follows the love of God as a necessary consequence; and it is itself essential to a right performance of all our duties towards our fellow-men. It dictates justice and charity towards all, and preeminent fervency of affection towards our fellow-Christians. Obedience to this commandment has a peculiar tendency to soften and enlarge the heart, and thus to improve our capacity for loving God himself—the supreme object of every pure affection.

While the acts of the soul which we have now been considering—contemplation, communion, submission, obedience, imitation of the divine character, and the exercise of charity—strengthen that love to God which is the main qualification for the enjoyment of heaven, they severally form essential features in the employments, or condition, of the saints in bliss. *They all belong to the one great system of future and eternal happiness.*

It appears, then, that as appointed means of increasing that divine affection, from which they spring, these several acts of the soul will for ever continue to operate in the world to come. *Here* their influence is counteracted and weakened by innumerable obstructions—*there* it is exerted without the smallest hindrance, and in a far more exalted degree. Thus we may rest in a sure persuasion, that if we are graciously permitted an entrance, through the blood of Jesus, into heavenly mansions, our love to God will be *for*

ever increasing. The longer we contemplate his perfections, commune with him in spirit, obey his commandments, conform ourselves to his moral attributes, and exercise love towards his creatures, the more deeply and largely will our love towards himself flow onward, and it will flow to all eternity.

There, while the golden ages roll,
And speed their ceaseless course,
And pleasure spreads from soul to soul
From an unfathom'd source ;
And contemplation's eye surveys,
From heights before untrod,
With silent, fix'd, enraptur'd gaze,
The glories of our God ;
And sweet communion draws the tie,
That binds us to the Lord,
And thrill the chords of sympathy,
Responsive to his word ;
And swift to do his high behest,
Each spirit wings her flight,
And virtue glows on every breast
A gem of purest light ;
And friendship lends her generous fires,
To all that glorious throng,
Who join with zeal that never tires,
In one harmonious song—
Love in an ever-deep'ning tide,
O'er all the plains above,
Spreads, like a sea immensely wide,
For God himself is Love.

The apostle Paul has shewn us the connexion between being “rooted and grounded in love,” and comprehending “with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height ;¹ a connexion

¹ Eph. iii, 17, 18.

which must surely be experienced by glorified saints, in a far higher degree than by Christians upon earth. Hence it may be presumed, that just in proportion to the increase of our love to God, in the heavenly state, will be the enlargement of our faculties for the reception of divine knowledge, and for every wise and holy purpose. And with this enlargement of our spiritual capacities, will for ever keep pace, as we may fully believe, the heightening of our joy. As there are in heaven different orders and stations of beings, and different degrees of glory—a doctrine often alluded to in Scripture—so we cannot fail to conclude from our premises, that the happiness of the “spirits of the just made perfect,” is *eternally progressive*.

While we rejoice with trembling, in the view of this amazing prospect, we ought not to cast a veil over its tremendous alternative. How awful is it to reflect on the opposite extremity! As love to God is for ever on the increase in the souls of the blessed, so the contrary affection of aversion from the Fountain of all holiness, must have an inevitable tendency to become more and more aggravated, in the society of the devil and his angels, and in the regions of death, darkness, and pollution. And with this ever-widening distance of soul from the Author of all good, must, in the very nature of things, for ever keep pace the increase of *woe*—“where their worm dieth not, and where the fire is not quenched.”

Reader, if notwithstanding the name of a Christian, thou art still a votary of this present world, following the vain devices and desires of thy own heart,—pause,

I beseech thee, in thy mad career, and meditate for a few moments on the heights of heaven, and on the depths of hell. The curtains of the night will soon close around thee, and thy mental and moral condition, thy happiness or thy woe, will be fixed for ever. Repent of thy transgressions; bring all the burden of thy sins and cast it at the feet of Jesus. "Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world." Wash thy polluted garments in the blood of his atonement; and cease to restrain the influences of his Holy Spirit. Embrace, in good earnest, the faith, the hope, and the virtue, of the Christian, and *live for ever!*

Reader, if thou hast already made covenant with the Lord, to be his child and servant—if thou hast already been taught of the Spirit to love him who first loved thee—*persevere*. Fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life; go forward on thy march towards Zion: give thyself wholly to the disposal of Him who died for thee and rose again; count nothing too near or too dear to part with for his name's sake; follow the guidance of the Comforter in all things; watch unto prayer; be humble, be faithful, be diligent; and *all will be well*. Christ will continue to be thy all-sufficient portion here; and soon, very soon, it will be thy blessed lot to exchange his cross on earth, for a crown of righteousness in heaven, immortal, incorruptible, and full of glory.

A LETTER TO A FRIEND
ON THE
AUTHORITY, PURPOSE, AND EFFECTS
Of Christianity,
AND ESPECIALLY ON THE DOCTRINE OF
REDEMPTION.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE original of the following Letter was occasioned by the request of a friend of mine, that I would furnish him with a selection of passages from the Holy Scriptures, on that most important and interesting subject—the Christian doctrine of Redemption. Since, in the course of a private circulation, the Letter has been found useful to some individuals, I am induced to correct and publish it, in the hope that others, who stand in need of the same kind of information, may, through the divine blessing, derive from it a similar benefit.

L E T T E R .

MY DEAR FRIEND,

THE mercy of God in Christ Jesus is a subject which I have long been accustomed to regard as superior to all others, in point of interest and importance. Conscious, in some degree, of the perfect purity of an omnipresent Deity, as well as of the corruption of my own heart, I rejoice in the assurance that means are provided through which the stain of my sins may be washed out, and through which I may be accepted with favour by the Author of all true happiness. Nor is it wonderful that I should entertain, for others whom I love, an earnest, and even painful solicitude, that they also may be brought to the discovery of this *way of escape*, and may come to acknowledge Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, to be “the propitiation for their sins”—their “resurrection” and their “life.”

Animated by these feelings, I cannot but be willing, according to the best of my ability, to communicate scriptural information on the great doctrine of *redemption*; and most happy shall I be to assist the anxious inquiries of a friend whom I so sincerely regard, on this all-important article of the Christian faith. Since, however, I am well aware how useless it is to attempt

the formation of a superstructure without laying a foundation, I shall take the liberty, in the first place, of stating two or three propositions, which will be found necessary to the validity of my future observations, but upon which it is far from my design to enter into any detailed argument.

Let it be observed, in the first place, that *Christianity is to be received, not as a moral science of human invention, but as a religion revealed to mankind by the Creator himself, and promulgated upon his authority.* In reference to this primary position, there are a few particulars of evidence to which it may be desirable for us shortly to advert.

I. That the principal writings of which the New Testament consists are genuine—that they were written in the apostolic age, and by the individuals with whose names they are inscribed—is a point evinced to be true by a greater variety and quantity of evidence, than has probably ever been brought to bear on a similar subject. We may adduce, *in the first place*, a multitude of Christian writers, from the first century downwards, who have made innumerable quotations from the various parts of that sacred volume: *secoudly*, many canons or lists of the books of the New Testament,¹ and commentaries on its several parts,

¹ One of these canons or lists is given by Eusebius, the learned Bishop of Cæsarea, who flourished in the early part of the fourth century. Speaking of the books of the New Testament, he informs us that the four Gospels, the Acts, the Epistles of Paul, and the first Epistles of John and Peter, (i. e. about seven eighths of the whole volume) were *confessed by all to be genuine*; but that the Epistles of James and Jude, the second Epistle of Peter, the second and third Epistles of John, and the Revelation, were *spoken*

composed at various times during the second, third, and fourth centuries of the Christian era : *thirdly*, versions of the New Testament into a variety of foreign dialects ; some of which versions (for example, the Syriac, the old Latin, and the Sahidic) were probably written in the course of the second century : *fourthly*, the heathen enemies of Christianity, (especially Celsus, Porphyry, and Julian,) who, in their attacks on the divine authority of our religion, were so far from denying the genuineness of the New Testament, that they frequently referred to it, as written by the apostles and evangelists. And, *lastly*, these external evidences are abundantly confirmed by numerous internal indications of a genuine origin : for example, the Hebraistic Greek, in which the whole volume is composed—a dialect which distinguishes it from all the works of the fathers, and plainly indicates both its real date and the country of its authors ; the absence of anachronisms ; the uniformity of style subsisting in those several parts of it which are attributed to the same authors ; and, above all, the exactness with which

against by some persons. Hist. Eccl. lib. iii. cap. xxv. Although the evidences stated above bear with the greatest force on that major part of the New Testament which Eusebius has included in the former of these classes, they are, to a great extent, applicable also to the remaining books which he describes as *spoken against*, and especially so to the Revelations. See *Lardner's Credibility*.

The Epistle to the Hebrews is reckoned by Eusebius in this passage among the Epistles of Paul. The apostolic date of that treatise is demonstrated by a variety of satisfactory evidence ; but since it is anonymous, the question, whether Paul was its author or not, still continues unsettled. It has long appeared to me that the arguments for the affirmative of that question, are on the whole too powerful to be resisted.

(on a comparison with other allowed sources of information) it is found to unfold, in an incidental manner, the customs and circumstances of the Jews, Romans, and Greeks, during the age of Christ and his apostles.

Nor can we with any reason question the general correctness of the *text* of the New Testament; for although the early multiplication of copies naturally gave rise to many unimportant various readings, it obviously afforded an ample check upon any wilful alteration of the common record. In the numerous manuscripts of the Greek Testament now existing, (some of which are of very considerable antiquity,) in the early versions, and in the quotations made by the ancient fathers, modern critics have found sufficient criteria for the settlement of the sacred text; and the result of their indefatigable inquiries is this—that the New Testament, as Christians for several centuries past have been accustomed to read it, continues unimpaired—that it has not been deprived of a single article of faith, a single historical narration, or a single moral precept.

II. It being a well established point, that the writings, of which the New Testament consists, are the genuine work of the evangelists and apostles, we may, in the next place, observe that the history, related in those writings, is credible and true. In support of this proposition, it might be almost sufficient to remark, that the gospels were composed by four honest, simple, and independent writers; two of whom were apostles, and eye-witnesses of the facts which they relate, and the other two, companions of apostles, and in full possession of the sources of exact information.

With regard to the book of Acts, the truth of the history contained in it is evinced in a highly satisfactory manner (as Paley has ingeniously shown in his "*Horæ Paulinæ*") by a variety of incidental accordances between that book and the epistles of Paul.

It is true that the history of Jesus is a miraculous history, and therefore requires for its confirmation a greater quantity and higher degree of evidence, than could reasonably be demanded to secure the belief of history in general. But the evidences, of which we are in possession, are amply sufficient to meet the peculiarities of the case. That these miraculous events really occurred, rests on the especial testimony of all the original promulgators of the gospel. Not only have Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, recorded them in their writings, but it is plain that the apostles in general grounded their preaching of the gospel on the authority of these facts.² That principal miracle, more particularly, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, was an event to which, in an especial manner, they uniformly bore witness.³ Now, that the testimony of the first preachers of the gospel, on the subject of these miracles, was *true*, must be allowed, for the following plain reasons:—1. Because it was the *accordant* testimony of *numerous* witnesses: 2. Because the written records of these supernatural events abound in the internal marks of simplicity, candour, and entire fidelity: 3. Because, on the one hand, the miracles, to which the apostles bore witness, were of such a nature, that they could not possibly

² Acts ii, 22; x, 37, 38.

³ Acts i, 22; iv, 33.

have been themselves deceived respecting them; and, on the other hand, the real integrity and goodness which these persons displayed, absolutely preclude the supposition that they intended to deceive others: 4. Because they confirmed the truth of their testimony by lives of unexampled self-denial, and by a willing submission to innumerable sufferings, and even to the infliction of death itself: 5. Because, in further proof of the truth of their declarations respecting Jesus Christ, they were enabled to work miracles themselves. This fact is repeatedly recorded in the book of Acts: it is proved, *first*, by the appeals which the apostle Paul, in his authentic letters, has made to the miracles wrought by him, in the presence of *those very persons* whom he thus addresses; as well as to the supernatural powers with which some of those persons were themselves endowed:⁴ and, *secondly*, by a known result, for the production of which such extraordinary interpositions of divine power appear to have been essential—I mean the wonderfully extensive promulgation of early Christianity, not only without the assistance of human authority, but in direct opposition to the systems, habits, and prejudices, of the whole heathen world.

The miracles of Jesus Christ and his apostles, therefore, really took place; they were *true miracles*. Now we acknowledge that God created all things, and instituted those general laws by which the order of nature is regulated and maintained: and miracles are supernatural infractions of those general laws, and changes in that order. Every reflecting person will

⁴ Rom. xv, 19; 1 Cor. xiv; 2 Cor. xii, 12.

allow that no *creature* can possess any illicit, independent, power of controverting the designs, or of interrupting the harmonious arrangements, of an omnipotent God; and hence it follows, according to my apprehension, that all true miracles, like the original creation, are to be regarded as the especial work of God himself. If, however, it is granted, that a certain limited and controled power over the order of nature has sometimes been permitted, for especial purposes, to be exercised by evil spirits, such an allowance by no means affects the Christian miracles; which not only proclaimed their own divine origin, by their astonishing variety and greatness, but were wrought in direct attestation of a professed revelation from God, and for the furtherance of ends perfectly consistent with his justice, holiness, and mercy. Christianity, then, was attested by supernatural events, of which the Deity was the sole and immediate author; a fact to which nothing similar can be predicated either of Mahometanism, or of any of the religious systems of the heathen: Christianity, therefore, and Christianity *only*, is the religion of God.

III. It appears, in the third place, to be a clear and undeniable position, that the actual knowledge of the future is an attribute peculiar to the Divine Being. No one, who admits the existence of the one God, will refuse to allow that, in point of both knowledge and power, he is placed at an infinite distance above all his creatures—that, while he regulates the course of events according to his own will, none of those creatures are his counsellors, and none of them are capable of penetrating his secret designs and intentions.

From these premises, it follows that all prophecies, which, by their exact fulfilment, are proved to have proceeded, not from intellectual sagacity and human conjecture, but from actual foreknowledge, must have been inspired, or dictated by the Almighty himself; and further, that the religion, which is attested by such prophecies, is a divinely authorised religion.

That Christianity is attested by true prophecies, is a fact capable of easy proof. Jesus Christ was a prophet, and during his conversation among men accurately predicted a variety of events, which were then future; especially his own death and resurrection, and the circumstances by which they were to be attended; the out-pouring of the Holy Ghost; and the approaching sufferings of the Jews, with the destruction of their city and temple. But, perhaps, the most striking prophecies, which attest the truth of Christianity, are those contained in the Old Testament, and relating to our Saviour himself. The writings of the Hebrew prophets are replete with the promises of a great spiritual deliverer, denominated the Messiah, who was appointed to appear in the world at a certain period declared by the prophet Daniel. In various parts of these writings (composed as they were by a number of unconnected persons, living at different periods,) it is predicted that this long-expected deliverer should arise, according to the flesh, out of the seed of Abraham;⁵ and from the family of David;⁶ that he should be born miraculously of a virgin;⁷ that his birth-place should be Bethlehem;⁸ that his outward situation

⁵ Gen. xxii, 18.

⁷ Isa. vii, 14.

⁶ Isa. xi, 1; Jer. xxiii, 5.

⁸ Micah v, 2.

should be of a very humble description;⁹ that he should be engaged in proclaiming glad tidings, and in relieving the sufferings of mortality;¹ that his character should be distinguished for gentleness, kindness, faithfulness, and all righteousness;² that nevertheless the Jews would refuse to believe in him;³ that he should be despised, rejected, and persecuted, of men;⁴ that he should be betrayed by one of his familiar friends, and that his followers should be scattered from him;⁵ that he should be led as a lamb to the slaughter, and be as a sheep dumb before his shearers;⁶ that he should be cut off, yet not for himself;⁷ that his body should not see corruption, nor his life be hid in the grave;⁸ finally, that he should ascend into heaven;⁹ and that he should exercise an universal and never-ending government over mankind.¹ In addition to these leading facts, there are predicted, in the Old Testament, a number of minor particulars respecting the life and death of the Messiah; and, to complete their wonderful statement, the prophets, whilst they

⁹ Isa. liii, 2.

¹ Isa. lxi, 1.

² Isa. xi, 4, 5, 6; xliii. 1—3.

³ Isa. liii, 1.

⁴ Isa. liii, 3, 4; Ps. xxii.

⁵ Ps. xli, 9; Zech. xiii, 7.

⁶ Isa. liii, 7.

⁷ Dan. ix, 26.

⁸ The words in Psalm xvi, 10, translated in our common English version, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell," may with greater propriety be rendered, "Thou wilt not leave my life or person in the grave." The great majority of the prophecies quoted above, relate immediately to the Messiah. In the Psalms, however, several of the passages, which in their second sense describe the Messiah, have an immediate reference to David, whose character and circumstances (as was well understood by the ancient Jews) typified those of his divine Descendant.

⁹ Ps. lxxviii, 18.

¹ Ps. lxxii, 8; Isa. ix, 7; Dan. vii, 14.

depict the circumstances of his human nature, and especially his many humiliating sufferings, describe him, nevertheless, *as one possessing the name and character of Jehovah himself.*²

At the time appointed for the appearance of the Messiah, Jesus was born, of the seed of Abraham, of the family of David, at Bethlchem, of a virgin. We find him living in an humble outward condition—engaged in preaching the gospel, in healing the sick, and in relieving every species of bodily and mental distress—meek, gentle, kind, faithful, and fulfilling all righteousness—not believed by the Jews—despised, rejected, and persecuted of men—betrayed by his familiar friend—forsaken in the hour of trial by all his followers—led as a lamb to the slaughter—dumb in the presence of his persecutors—cut off, but not for himself—rising from the dead—ascending into heaven, and assuming a spiritual government over men—fulfilling in his own character and circumstances a variety of minor particulars—*and all these things in precise accordance with the predictions of the Old Testament.* More particularly, in the midst of his humiliations and distresses, and notwithstanding the lowliness and piety of his human character, we find him, in agreement with those predictions, receiving the homage,³ asserting the character,⁴ displaying the powers,⁵ and

² Ps. xlv, 6; Isa. vii, 14; ix, 6; xxxv, 4; xl, 3, 10, 11; Jer. xxiii, 5, 6; Zech. ii, 10—13; Mal. iii, 1.

³ Matt. xiv, 33; John xx, 28, 29.

⁴ Matt. ix, 2—6; xii, 6, 8; xviii, 20; John v, 21—23; x, 28—30; xiv, 9, 23; xvi, 7; Rev. ii, 23.

⁵ Matt. viii, 3, 8—13, *comp.* Acts ix, 34; Luke viii, 24; Matt. xii, 25; John xvi, 19, 30, *comp.* Rev. ii, 23; John xx, 22.

described by the titles,⁶ which appertain to Jehovah himself.

When a lock and key precisely correspond, though they be of a simple character, a presumption arises that they were intended for each other. When, instead of being formed in a simple manner, they are respectively complex, and curiously wrought in different directions, and nevertheless correspond; such a presumption is exceedingly strengthened. But when the lock is not only complex and curiously wrought, but contains such an extraordinary and wonderful combination of parts as to be absolutely *sui generis*, and without parallel; when, among all the keys in the world, none present even a slight approach to a correspondent conformation, except one; and by that the lock is easily and exactly fitted—then, surely, is all doubt on the subject discarded; and it becomes a moral certainty that the lock and key proceeded from the same master hand, and truly appertain to each other. Now this is a familiar but precise representation of the evidence afforded, by a comparison between the Old and New Testaments, that the prophecies concerning Jesus Christ were true prophecies; that they were inspired by an omniscient God; and, therefore, that the religion which they attest is a religion of divine origin.

IV. It is generally allowed by all persons who confess the existence and unity of God (whether they are believers in the Christian revelation or otherwise) that he is a Being not only of infinite power and know-

⁶ John i, 1; Rom. ix, 5; Rev. xix, 16.

ledge, but of the highest moral perfections. A comprehensive view even of natural religion leads to an easy admission of the declaration of the sacred writers that God is just, holy, true, bounteous, and merciful. Such being the moral attributes of our heavenly Father, we cannot refuse to allow, that it is our *reasonable service* to walk in his fear, to worship him with devotion of spirit, to obey his law, to promote his glory, and more especially to *set our love* upon him with the whole heart. And yet it is a fact, to which the history of past ages and present observation bear alike the most decisive testimony, that, by mankind in their unregenerate condition, this reasonable service is set aside and neglected. Now Christianity, considered as a religious system consisting of both doctrines and precepts, and applied by faith to the heart—that is to say, comprehensive and vital Christianity—is unquestionably the means of so transforming men, that in the dispositions of the soul, and in the regulation of the conduct, they come to “render unto God the things that are God’s.”

But further—when the true Christian is thus introduced to a peaceful communion with the Father of spirits, he is gradually weaned from his evil passions, and becomes conformed, in his own person, to the *moral attributes* of the Deity. As the face of a man is seen reflected in the mirror, so are those attributes seen *reflected* in his life and conversation. Pretenders to religion—the mere professors of the Christian name—form no exception to this observation, because they have no real connexion with our argument; but of those persons who place a full reliance upon Christ

as their Saviour, and who have yielded themselves *without reserve* to his guidance and government, it may with truth be asserted, that they are created anew in the *image of their Maker*. Undoubtedly they have still to contend with innumerable infirmities, and with many corrupt inclinations; and they can readily acknowledge, that, in the sight of the Most High, they are less than nothing and vanity. Nevertheless, in the integrity of their words and actions, in the purity of their intentions and conduct, in their kindness, charity, and long-suffering towards all around them, they *shew forth* the truth, the holiness, and the love, of that Being from whom alone all their virtue is derived.

Lastly, Christianity procures for mankind a pure and substantial happiness. The true Christian is happy far above all other persons, for various reasons:—because, though his sins have been many, he is reconciled to the Father, through the mediation of the Son; because, notwithstanding his natural weakness, he is enabled to walk in the way of righteousness, by the power of the Holy Spirit; because a sense of the divine love and approbation dwells in his heart; because he is taught to regard every tribulation as a moral discipline directed to greater good; and, lastly, because he is animated by the expectation of a future joy, perfectly unsullied in its nature, and eternal in its duration.

Now the several excellent results which have formed the subject of these observations, have never been adequately produced in men by any principles, except those of Christianity; but by the principles of Christianity, when cordially embraced and fully submitted

to, they are produced *without fail*. Experience may convince us that the contrivance of so comprehensive, so extraordinary, and so operative a moral system, was placed far beyond the reach of human invention : like the works of nature, it can be traced to nothing less efficacious than the wisdom, the power, and the love of God.

Christianity, therefore, is the religion of God ; and, since it is impossible that, in bringing his reasonable creatures into true piety, virtue, and happiness, the God of all truth should employ a mere illusion, it plainly follows that Christianity is *true*—that its doctrines are real, its hopes substantial, its promises certain.

V. Christianity, then, being the religion of God—the true, and only true religion—where are we to find an *authorised* record of the doctrines of which it consists ? I answer, not in the scholastic productions of polemical divines ; not in the treatises of modern and uninspired theologians ; not in the declarations of any particular church : but in the genuine compositions of inspired men ; *in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament*.

The genuineness of the New Testament is a point to which I have already adverted. That of the various books of history, law, psalmody, and prophecy, which compose the Old Testament, is satisfactorily evinced by the quotations made from these writings in every part of the New Testament ; by a Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures, written at a date long prior to the Christian era ; by the plain testimony of Josephus, Philo, and other Jewish writers ; by the

care which the ancient Jews are known to have exercised, in order to the inecorrupt preservation of their sacred books ; by the fact that, before the captivity, the law of Moses was often read in public, and that, after the captivity, the reading of both the law and the prophets formed a regular part of the synagogue service ; and lastly by a variety of internal evidences, derived from language and style, from the circumstantiality of description and narrative, and from the mutual yet incidental accordance of part with part.

It being admitted that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are genuine, that the gospel history is true, and that Christ was a divinely commissioned teacher ; we are placed at once in possession of satisfactory evidence that these writings were given by inspiration of God. That such was the fact, as it regards the Old Testament, is expressly declared by the apostle Paul ;⁷ and the testimony of this apostle on the subject, is confirmed by that of Jesus Christ himself, who, in his conversations with the Jews and with his disciples, frequently referred to the Jewish Scriptures in such a manner as plainly to attribute to them an absolute and indefeasible authority. With respect to the New Testament, we learn from the authentic history which it contains, that the persons by whom it was written (especially the apostles who composed the greater part of it) were directly inspired ; and inspired for the purpose of promulgating Christian truth. Whether it was by preaching or by writing that they performed the service thus committed to them, it is indisputable (since the gospel history is

⁷ 2 Tim. iii, 16.

true) that their doctrine rested not on their own authority, but on that of the Divine Being whom they served, and flowed from no other source than his Holy Spirit.⁸

Inspiration, it may be remarked, operates under various circumstances, and is bestowed in various measures. Now that the inspiration of the apostles and of some of their companions was of a very high and plenary description, may be inferred from a most important fact already noticed, viz. that they were endued with the power of working miracles. The *work* of God confirmed the *word* of God. The signs and wonders which the Lord displayed through the agency of those gifted men, afforded a specific and irresistible evidence, that he was also the author of their doctrine, in whatsoever form that doctrine was delivered.

To the external proofs of which we are thus in possession, that the Holy Scriptures were given by inspiration, and that their contents are therefore to be received as of *divine authority*, are to be added many powerful internal evidences. He who takes a sound and comprehensive view of the wonderful variety and richness of the sacred records—of the admirable moral harmony which pervades the whole volume—of the perfect adaptation of the preparatory system as described by Moses and the prophets, with the fulness of gospel light as revealed to us in the New Testament—of the practical excellence of those

⁸ See Matt. x, 18—20; Luke xxiv, 46—49; John xiv, 26; Acts ii, 4; 1 Cor. ii, 3—5, &c.

doctrines, precepts, and sentiments, which distinguish the Bible from all other books, or which in other books, are simply borrowed from the Bible—will presently confess not only that the religion unfolded in the Scriptures is divine, but that the *record itself* must be traced not to the unassisted efforts of fallible men, but to the spirit of perfect wisdom—to the *mind which cannot err*.

The Scriptures, then, are a *divinely authorised* record of religious truth. If I am told that there is much in the Bible which even the learned cannot understand, and some things, perhaps, which the wicked have perverted to evil purposes, I would observe in reply, that in this respect there is an obvious analogy between the *written word* and the *works of God*; for there is much also in the science of nature itself, which the wise cannot comprehend, and which the vicious have misapplied to evil. And I would further remark, that the Scriptures are not intended to gratify the curiosity, or to illumine the speculations, of worldly wisdom; but to instruct the humble and devotional reader, and to teach the simple and the meek the way to heaven. To such as these, whatsoever be their condition in life, or their measure of mental cultivation, the Bible, as to every main doctrine and every practical principle, is explicit and intelligible. While the divine law is so accordant with the conclusions of profound reasoning, that the most enlightened philosophers have yielded to it their willing homage, it is also so plain, that, when it is received with simplicity and godly sincerity, “the wayfaring man, though a fool, cannot err therein.”

VI. Having thus briefly surveyed some of the principal evidences, from which the conclusion is safely deduced that Christianity is true, and that the Bible contains a genuine and divinely authorised record of all its truths,—we may now proceed to inquire what things that sacred volume declares respecting God, ourselves, and Jesus Christ.

There is nothing by which the Scriptures are more eminently distinguished,—nothing by which their importance and divine origin are more clearly evinced,—than by the information which they impart respecting the nature and character of *God*. Much light indeed, on this great subject, may be derived from the works of the Deity which surround us on every side, and which proclaim in intelligible language, his wisdom, power, and goodness; and also from that moral sense of his own existence and authority, which (however it may in numberless instances be depraved and perverted,) he appears to have impressed universally on the mind of man. But the knowledge which we derive from natural religion respecting God is, in a wonderful manner, augmented and *completed* in the records of his revealed will. We learn from the Scriptures that there is no other God but JEHOVAH—that he exists from eternity to eternity—that he is the Creator, Governor, and Preserver of the universe—that he is omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly wise—that in him we live and move and have our being—that he is the author of the moral law—that he is the source of every good and perfect gift, and more especially of everlasting life—that he is holy, just, true, faithful, righteous, long suffering, and merciful—that

he is *love*; a tender and compassionate Father to those who walk in his fear and obey his law—that, eternal and infinite as he is, he graciously extends his immediate care to the most minute interests of his creatures—that not a sparrow falleth to the ground without him, and that he numbers the very hairs of our heads. It is more particularly to our present purpose to observe, that the Deity is ever described in the Bible as a Being of absolute purity; so that in his sight every species of iniquity, whether in thought, word, or deed, is abominable. Hence it follows, that he will by no means acquit his guilty creatures *while they continue in sin*; and it is plainly declared, that without holiness none shall see God.

Here I would remark, that while the inspired writers bear the most ample and decisive testimony to the unity of the Supreme Being—while the great principle that God is *one*, lies at the very foundation of their scheme of religion, and pervades it in every part—we nevertheless learn, from many of their declarations, that, in that great scheme of mercy which he has ordained for our salvation, the ONE GOD has manifested himself to mankind (with reverence be it stated) as the FATHER, the SON, and the HOLY SPIRIT.

The mode of that distinction and of that union, which we believe to subsist in the divine nature, is placed far beyond the reach of our limited comprehension, and can never be a fit subject either for speculation or for definition; but the doctrine that there *is* such a distinction, and that there *is* such an union, will never cease to be highly prized by those persons who are aware of its practical influence and operation.

I may confess that it has long appeared to me to be a sound and necessary deduction not only from the passages of Scripture in which the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Comforter, are upheld to view as the common sources of our spiritual good, and the common objects of our faith and allegiance, but from all those also in which there is a distinct reference to the divinity either of the Son, or of the Spirit.⁹

Respecting ourselves, the Scriptures reveal many truths of the highest importance to us. From various declarations contained in them, we plainly learn that man is endued not only with a frail body, but with a soul; and that when the body perishes, the soul continues to exist;¹ that, moreover, in a day to come the dead will be raised in a body incorruptible and spiritual;² that this short life is the only time appointed for our probation; and, that, in another world, we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, and shall then be rewarded with everlasting happiness, or punished with everlasting misery—*according to our works*.³ The Scriptures, moreover, declare that man was created in the moral similitude of God—that, yielding to the temptations of the devil, he fell from that image—that now, being a fallen and depraved creature, he is, *in his unregenerate nature*, prone to wickedness—that

⁹ See Matt. xxviii, 19; John xiv, 26; xv, 26; xvi, 13—15; 2 Cor. xiii, 14, *comp.* John i, 1—3, &c. Acts xiii, 2; 1 Cor. xii, 11; 2 Cor. iii, 17.

¹ Matt. x, 28; xvi, 26; 1 Thes. v, 23; Heb. x, 39; Luke xvi, 19—31; xx, 38; xxiii, 42, 43; 2 Cor. v, 1—8.

² John v, 28, 29; 1 Cor. xv.

³ Matt. xxv, 31—46; Rom. ii, 6—11; xiv, 10; Rev. xx, 12—15.

his heart is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (or diseased)—that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God"—that "they are together become unprofitable; that there is none that doeth good, no not one," and that thus "*all the world*" is "become guilty before God."⁴

Such are the awful statements contained in the sacred volume respecting *ourselves*. Where, then, is there any hope for us who are fallen, corrupt, inclined to sin, and, in so great a multitude of particulars, sinners; and who are therefore separated in our natural state from a just and holy God, and are plainly liable to eternal separation from him in the world to come? Truly our hope is only in the *mercy* of God, through the Saviour of men. *A Saviour, or I die—a Redeemer, or I perish for ever!*

Lastly, therefore, we may inquire, what is the doctrine of the Bible respecting our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? We read in Scripture, that he is the Word—the Son of God the Father Almighty—that in the beginning, before the world was created, and from everlasting, he was *with God*;⁵ that by him all things were created that are in heaven and that are in earth;⁶ that without him was not any one thing made that was made;⁷ that he was the light and life of men;⁸ that he and the Father are *one*;⁹ that he is therefore *God*;¹ Jehovah our righteousness;² the

⁴ Jer. xvii, 9; Rom. iii, 1—19, 23, *comp.* Isa. liii, 6: Matt. xv, 19.

⁵ John i, 1; xvii, 5, *comp.* Mic. v, 2.

⁶ Col. i, 16; Heb. i, 2, 10.

⁷ John i, 3.

⁸ John i, 4, 9.

⁹ John x, 30.

¹ John i, 1.

² Jer. xxiii, 5.

mighty God;³ the true God;⁴ the great God;⁵ God over all;⁶ that he is the searcher of the reins and the hearts, knows what is in man, and bestows upon his servants all their spiritual gifts and graces;⁷ the object of faith, prayer, glorification, and all manner of worship;⁸ that he “fillet^h all in all,”⁹ that he is “the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever;” “the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the first and the last.”¹ The Bible further declares, that when the fulness of time was come, “God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law;”² that the Word became flesh,³ that he was born a child into the world, and really took our frail nature upon him, being made in all points “like unto his brethren, yet without sin;”⁴ that he went about doing good, healing the sick, giving sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf, raising the dead to life, and preaching the gospel to the poor—that he was betrayed into the hands of wicked men, and died on the cross—that on the third day he rose from the dead, and that he ascended to the right hand of the Majesty on

³ Isaiah ix, 6.⁴ 1 John v, 20.

⁵ TIT. ii. 13. “The glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” A plain rule of Greek construction requires that the original of these words should be rendered, “The glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.” So the passage appears to have been universally understood among the ancient fathers of the church.

⁶ Rom. ix, 5.⁷ Rev. ii, 23; Acts ii, 33; 2 Cor. xii, 9; Eph. iv, 11.

⁸ John iii, 16; Acts vii, 59, 60; 2 Cor. xii, 8; Heb. i, 6; xiii, 21; Rev. v, 13.

⁹ Eph. i, 23.¹ Heb. xiii, 8; Rev. xxii, 13.² Gal. iv, 4.³ John i, 4.⁴ Heb. ii, 14.

high, being restored to that state of infinite and unsearchable glory, which he possessed in the Father's presence before the world began⁵—that now he is exalted of the Father, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come,⁶—finally, that he will bring to a termination the whole economy or dispensation of which he is the Mediator, by coming again with all his holy angels, for the final and universal judgment of quick and dead.⁷

VII. Having thus adduced some of the principal declarations of Scripture respecting the nature and history of our Lord Jesus Christ, I may proceed, without further delay, to the consideration of that doctrine of redemption, for the elucidation of which this Letter is principally intended; and I may commence by putting a very simple question, What could be the mighty and equivalent purpose for which this infinitely glorious Person, the Son of God, who is one with the Father, and is therefore himself the everlasting Jehovah—should so marvellously condescend and humble himself as to take our nature upon him, in that nature to undergo every species of contumely and contradic-

⁵ John xvii, 5; Heb. i, 3.

⁶ Eph. i, 21.

⁷ Matt. xiii, 40—42; xxiv, 30, 31; 1 Cor. xv, 25—28.

⁷ I am well aware that many attempts have been made to interpret some of the passages of Scripture relating to the nature and character of Christ, in a lower sense than is here given to them. Long and careful investigation has however produced in my own mind a *settled conviction*, that the commonly received interpretation of those passages, is in general the only one which consists with the sound rules of philology and criticism.

tion of sinners, and finally to die on the cross a cruel and shameful death?

When we reflect on the perfect adaptation which always subsists, and which is so generally even apparent, in the operations both of nature and of providence, between the cause and the effect, the means and the end—when we thus take analogy as the ground of our reasoning—we can scarcely avoid perceiving how strong an improbability attaches to the supposition, that SUCH AN ONE should not only come into the world, but should live, suffer, and die, as a man, for the *single* purpose of *revealing* the truth. Experience teaches us that any inspired person, whose divine mission was attested by miracles, might have been an adequate instrument for that purpose: for it is evidently on this simple ground, that Christians are unanimous in giving their credence to the doctrines delivered to the Jews by Moses, and to the followers of Christ by the apostles. No doubt, to reveal the truth was one of the offices of our blessed Saviour—that chief of prophets: nor are we to forget, that it was another of his offices, by his holy and merciful life and conversation on earth, to institute that perfect *pattern* after which the conduct of his disciples, in all future ages, was to be formed and regulated. But, important and salutary as these offices were, the peculiar circumstances of the case are such, as inevitably lead us to believe, that, in humbling himself from the height of his divine glory—in assuming our frail and suffering nature—and in subjecting himself even to the death of the cross—the Son of God had yet higher, nobler, and *more comprehensive*, purposes in his view. When we

consider the infinite dignity and absolute omnipotence of our heavenly Visitor, and the marvellous love which he has displayed in visiting us, we cannot fail to conclude that such a dispensation of divine mercy towards us was intended to supply *all* our spiritual need. Now, were we, through the means of that dispensation, to receive nothing but information, precept, and example, our need would be far indeed from being supplied. Powerless and corrupt as we are, we should still be left to perish in our sins, and the light, thus communicated to us, would only aggravate our woe, and render our destruction more terrible. Where is the individual who understands the plague of his own heart, who is not aware that he stands in need, not only of information, but of reconciliation with God; not only of light, but of life; not only of precept and example, but of power to obey the one and to follow the other? Yes, my dear friend, the gospel of our Lord and Saviour is no message of glad tidings to us, unless it proclaims to us *indemnity* and *cure*. Thus, and thus only, will it supply *all* our spiritual need.

This plain course of reasoning leads us at once to the conclusion, that Christ did indeed come in order to bestow upon us, not only information and precept, but indemnity and cure. But happily this is a subject on which we are not left to any conclusions of our own formation. It is one on which the declarations of Holy Writ are equally abundant and explicit.

The very first passage of Scripture in which the Messiah is alluded to, proclaims the great purpose of his mission. "I will put enmity," said Jehovah to

the serpent, "between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed ; *it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*"⁸ Christian commentators generally allow, that by the seed of the woman is here intended the Messiah, and that by the serpent is represented the devil, the author of all moral evil. We therefore learn from the prophecy, that Christ was to bruise the serpent's head ; or, in other words, to destroy the devil and his works.⁹ "For as much, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same ; *that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, even the devil.*" "He that committeth sin is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, *that he might destroy the works of the devil.*" It was by means of *his death*, that the Messiah was to obtain a complete victory over our spiritual adversary ; a doctrine which perfectly accords with Isaiah's celebrated prophecy respecting his vicarious and propitiatory sufferings : "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows ; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions ; he was bruised for our iniquities ; the chastisement of our peace (or whereby our peace is procured) was upon him ; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray : we have turned every one to his own way : and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity

⁸ Gen. iii, 15.

⁹ *Comp.* Heb. ii, 14 ; and 1 John iii, 8.

of us all. *He was oppressed, and he was afflicted:*¹ he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. . . . Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”²

That this consolatory passage of Scripture relates to our Lord Jesus Christ, is proved, partly by strong internal evidence, and partly by the repeated testimony of the authors of the New Testament. Who does not perceive that it proclaims *indemnity* for the sinner, through the sufferings and death of a Saviour? The same doctrine is powerfully expressed in the words addressed by Jehovah to the Messiah, as recorded in the prophecies of Zechariah: “As for thee also, by *the blood of thy covenant* I have sent forth thy prisoners *out of the pit wherein is no water*: turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope.”³

Such are the declarations of prophecy respecting that mighty propitiation for sin, which was to distinguish the introduction of the gospel dispensation; nor ought it to be forgotten that the whole sacrificial institution of the Jews was “a shadow of good things to come,” and was fraught with relation to the same doctrine. This observation applies in a very especial

¹ The words thus rendered ought rather to be translated, as Bishop Lowth has well observed, ‘*it was exacted, and he was made answerable.*’

² Isa. liii, 4—12.

³ Zech. ix, 11, 12.

manner to the slaying of the Lamb in the passover, and to the offering up of the bullock and goat on the great day of atonement. For Jesus Christ "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," is described by the apostle Paul as "our passover," who "is sacrificed for us;"⁴ and we are plainly taught in the epistle to the Hebrews, that the High Priest who offered up the victims, first "for his own sins, and then for the people's," and who, on that solemn occasion, entered into the holiest place, and sprinkled the blood over the mercy seat, was but the type of that Saviour who is entered into the heavens for us, who sprinkles his blood on our hearts, and who by "*one offering* hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."⁵

But in order to that destruction of the works of the devil which was to be effected by the Messiah, there was need not only of a propitiatory sacrifice, but of a powerful purifying influence. Accordingly, in those prophecies of the Old Testament which are acknowledged by both Jews and Christians to relate to the times of the Messiah, we find many clear promises of the more abundant effusion of such an influence on the Lord's people, and of its practical and internal operation. "Thus saith the Lord that made thee and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee, fear not, O Jacob my servant, and thou Jeshurun whom I have chosen. For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour MY SPIRIT upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring."⁶ "Then will I sprinkle clean

⁴ 1 Cor. v, 7.

⁵ *Comp.* Lev. xvi, with Heb. ix, x.

⁶ Isa. xlv, 2, 3.

water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put MY SPIRIT within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; and ye shall keep my judgments to do them.”⁷ Precisely consonant with these passages is the description given by Jeremiah of the principal characteristics of the New Covenant: “But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”⁸

The blessings which were thus to distinguish the New Covenant are represented by Isaiah as the “sure mercies of *David*,” that is, of the Messiah, the descendant of David, who was appointed in the counsels of the Most High to be a “witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people;”⁹ and from the various descriptions given to us, in the prophetic writings, of the universal authority and never-ending government of this Prince of Peace, we can scarcely avoid deducing the inference, that he was himself to

⁷ Ezek. xxxvi, 25—27.

⁸ Jer. xxxi, 33, 34.

⁹ Isa. lv, 1—4.

dispense those spiritual gifts, and to conduct those powerful internal operations, by which his dominion over the hearts of men was to be obtained and secured. Accordingly, we learn from Psalm lxviii, 18, that on his ascension into glory, the Messiah was to “*lead captivity captive,*” and receive “*gifts for men;*” and Malachi has announced the sudden appearance and spiritual work of our Redeemer, in the following sublime language: “Behold I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the LORD whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the Messenger of the covenant whom ye delight in; behold he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts: but who may abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when he appeareth? *for he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fuller’s soap. And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.*”¹

Thus then it appears from the concurrent declarations of those ancient prophets who spake of Christ beforehand “as they were moved of the Holy Ghost,” that the dispensation of the gospel was “to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up (that is to fulfil) the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most HOLY.”²

Lct us now direct our attention to the New Tes-

¹ Mal. iii, 1—3.

² Dan. ix, 24.

tament. When the angel Gabriel predicted to the virgin Mary the approaching birth of her Son, he added, "Thou shalt call his name *Jesus* (or the Saviour,) for he shall *save* his people *from their sins*." ³ By John the Baptist, also, the approaching Saviour of men was announced in the same character—"Behold the Lamb of God," said he, "which *taketh away the sin of the world*." ⁴

By our blessed Lord himself the great object of his coming was frequently and explicitly declared: "The Son of man is come to seek and to *save* that which was *lost*." ⁵ "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to *give his life a ransom for many*." ⁶ "This is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for many, for the remission of sins." ⁷ "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that *whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life* God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him *might be saved*." ⁸ "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh which *I will give for the life of the world*." ⁹ After his ascension also, when he delivered to the converted Paul an apostolic commission, he said, "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles,

³ Matt. i, 21.

⁴ John i, 29.

⁵ Luke xix, 10.

⁶ Matt. xx, 28.

Matt. xxvi, 28.

⁸ John iii, 14, 17.

⁹ John vi, 51.

to whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified, *by faith that is in me.*"¹

A multitude of declarations to the same effect were made by our Lord's apostles. From these, a few passages may be selected, by way of specimens, from the writings of the apostles John, Peter, and Paul.

JOHN.—"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law, for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested *to take away our sins*: and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not."² "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the *propitiation* for our sins. . . . And we have seen and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world."³ "What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? . . . These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. *Therefore* are they before the throne of God, &c."⁴

PETER.—"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the *precious blood* of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."⁵

¹ Acts xxvi, 16—18.

² 1 John iii, 4—6.

³ 1 John iv, 9, 10, 14.

⁴ Rev. vii, 13—15.

⁵ 1 Pet. i, 18, 19.

“Because Christ also suffered for us . . . who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness ; by whose stripes ye are healed : for ye were as sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.”⁶

PAUL.—“Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight ; for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets ; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe ; for there is no difference : for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God ; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus ; whom God hath set forth *to be a propitiation through faith in his blood*, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God : to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness : that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”⁷ “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered that sin might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound : that as sin hath reigned unto death, so also might grace reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.”⁸ “For the wages of sin is death,

⁶ 1 Pet. ii, 21, 24, 25.

⁷ Rom, iii, 20—26.

⁸ Rom v, 19—21.

but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”⁹ “Christ also loved the church and *gave himself* for it: that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word: that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”¹ “God hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son, in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins And you, that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled, in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight.”² “For the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men; teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ: who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”³

Justification through the blood of Christ, and sanctification by his Spirit, are very usually treated on as distinct doctrines; but different as they are in one point of view, it is nevertheless evident, from the tenor of these extracts, that they are inseparably connected. Both are essential to the work of salvation; both

⁹ Rom. vi, 23.¹ Eph. v, 25—27.² Col. i, 13, 14, 21, 22.³ Tit. ii, 11—14.

originate in the same divine mercy, and both are described, by the sacred writers, as arising out of the sacrifice of the Son of God. Was Christ “set forth” of the Father, to be “a propitiation through faith in his blood?” Did he “bare our sins in his own body on the tree?” Did he thus *give himself* for us? It was not only for the “remission of sins that are past” and for the justification of penitent believers, but also that “he might sanctify and cleanse” his church—“that he might redeem us from all iniquity”—that our consciences might be “purified from dead works, to *serve the living God*”—“that we, being dead to sins, should *live unto righteousness*.”⁴

“The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus,” says the apostle, “hath made me free from the law of sin and death; for what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us *who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*.”⁵ Again, “For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another; but after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared: not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his merey he saved us, *by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost*: which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour.”⁶ “I indeed bap-

⁴ Tit. ii, 14; Heb. ix, 14; 1 Pet. ii, 24.

⁵ Rom. viii, 2—4.

⁶ Tit. iii, 3—6.

tize you with water," said John the Baptist to the Jews, "but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you *with the Holy Ghost and with fire.*"⁷

Lastly, we learn from the inspired writers, that the same Mediator of the New Covenant, who was a propitiation for our sins, and who sheds forth on mankind the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, is mercifully engaged in pleading for his people before the throne of his Father. "My little children," said the apostle John, "these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an *advocate* with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."⁸ "Who is he that condemneth?" writes another apostle: "It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who also *maketh intercession* for us."⁹ "But this (man,) because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to *make intercession* for them."¹

Such are the powerful and harmonious statements presented to us by prophets and apostles, on the great subject of *Christian redemption*.

Now to the inquiry already suggested,—for what mighty and equivalent purpose the Son of God, by whom all things both in heaven and in earth were created, condescended to take our frail nature upon him, to dwell amongst us, and to die on the cross,—these statements afford an intelligible and perfectly

⁷ Matt. iii, 11; *comp.* John xv, 26; 1 John ii, 27.

⁸ 1 John ii, 1.

⁹ Rom. viii, 34.

¹ Heb. vii, 24, 25.

satisfactory answer. In his adorable mercy, in his almighty power, he came to *deliver* mankind; to *recover* them from their lost condition; to *save* them from the dominion of Satan, and from everlasting destruction; to supply all their spiritual need; to reconcile them through his own blood-shedding and mediation to the Father Almighty; to regenerate and sanctify them by his Holy Spirit; to provide for them both *indemnity* and *cure*; and thus to secure for them a boundless eternity of perfect happiness. Here are unfolded purposes worthy of the Son of God, and worthy of that peculiar display of his love and condescension revealed to us in the Bible—purposes fully adequate to his divine dignity, and capable of being carried into effect, *only* by him who, while he suffered in our suffering nature, was ONE with Jehovah—personally participating in the wisdom, power, and nature, of the only true God. Whether, indeed, we regard the human nature of Christ—in which he died for us, and is still “touched with the feeling of our infirmities,”—or his divine nature, which imparts a mighty efficacy to the whole plan of our redemption;—we cannot but acknowledge, that between the spiritual wants of mankind, on the one hand, and the sure mercies of the MESSIAH OF GOD, on the other, there is an accurate, a perfect adaptation.

VIII. In order to avail ourselves of the means which God in his unsearchable wisdom has thus ordained for our salvation, it is plainly necessary that we should believe in Jesus Christ. “These are written,” says the apostle John, “that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that

believing ye might have life through his name.”² “God so loved the world,” said Jesus himself, “that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever *believeth* in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”³ “I am the resurrection and the life: he that *believeth* in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and *believeth* in me shall never die.”⁴ Paul has declared, that “a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by *the faith of Jesus Christ*;⁵ and John the Baptist, when he bore witness to the power and excellency of the Lord Jesus, plainly stated the consequences both of believing and of *not* believing on the Son of God: “*He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*”⁶

Now, the faith in Christ, which is thus frequently declared to be the means of our salvation, is not only an assent of the understanding to the history and doctrines of the gospel. Such a faith is of itself a “dead faith,” and we read that the “devils also believe and tremble.”⁷ Saving faith is that living and active principle in our minds, by which, under the softening impressions of the love of God, we accept the Lord Jesus Christ as our only Saviour; spiritually feed upon him as upon the bread of life; place a humble yet sure reliance upon his mercy and power; and, *with full purpose and devotion of heart, submit our whole selves to his spiritual government.* This is

² John xx, 31.

³ John iii, 16.

⁴ John xi, 25, 26.

⁵ Gal. ii, 16.

⁶ John iii, 36.

⁷ Jas. ii, 19.

“the faith which worketh by love;”⁸ this is the faith which enables us to bring forth the pure and lovely fruits of holiness, charity, gentleness, patience, joy, and peace. And thus “if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away: behold, all things are become new.”⁹

Mortally diseased as we are,—the fatal malady of sin rankling within us,—how are we to experience *recovery*, if we refuse to accept the appointed remedy? Then let us endeavour to lay aside the “evil heart of unbelief;” let us no longer amuse ourselves with sceptical speculations on the theory of religion: but rather let us lay hold of its substance, and flee from the wrath to come. Let us listen to the words of love and tenderness, with which our compassionate Redeemer continues to invite us; “*Come unto me*, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest: take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”¹ Yes, we must take upon us the *yoke of Christ*. “To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.”² As we obtain reconciliation with the Father, through the sacrifice of Christ, let us ever remember that we can be brought into a state of true holiness, and *avail ourselves of that reconciliation*, only by a *full submission* to the influence and guidance of his Spirit. It is by his Spirit that our all-sufficient Redeemer changes our vile hearts, mortifies our sinful affections, imparts to

⁸ Gal. v, 6.

⁹ 2 Cor. v, 17.

¹ Matt. xi, 28—30.

² 1 Sam. xv, 22.

us his own holy nature, enables us to walk before him in purity and love, and thus prepares us for the enjoyment of that heavenly inheritance, which he has meritoriously procured for us, by his own perfect obedience and by the sacrifice of himself. "*If we walk in the light, as (God) is in the light,*" says the apostle John, "we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."³

Nothing, indeed, can be more futile than even the most correct system of religious opinions, if our faith has no influence on the *heart*, and fails, therefore, to produce its legitimate consequence—a *godly life and conversation*. Every thing in Christianity is directed to *practical* purposes; and in the day of righteous retribution, it will only aggravate our condemnation to have heard, understood, and approved the word of the Lord, if we shall have persisted in refusing to follow its dictates. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. . . . Every one that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came and beat upon that house: and it fell, and *great was the fall of it.*"⁴

Before I conclude, allow me briefly to recapitulate my whole argument.

Christianity is a religion which rests on the authority of God himself. 1. It is proved, by a greater

³ 1 John i, 7.

⁴ Matt. vii, 21, 26, 27.

variety and quantity of evidence than has ever been brought to bear on a similar subject, that the writings of which the New Testament is composed are *genuine*. 2. That the history recorded in those writings is true, we conclude from the testimony of several honest and independent witnesses; and that testimony is so confirmed by a number of remarkable and indisputable facts, as fully to meet the peculiarities of the case, and to establish the reality of the Christian *miracles*. Now miracles are interruptions of the order given to nature by an omnipotent God, and, like the creation itself, can justly be ascribed only to Him. Since, therefore, he has attested Christianity by true miracles, it follows that Christianity is a religion of divine authority. 3. The real foreknowledge of future events is an attribute which must also be deemed peculiar to the Almighty, and God has attested Christianity by *true prophecies*. Jesus Christ exactly predicted several events which were future when he spake. More especially, the prophecies of the Old Testament, respecting the Messiah, correspond with the character and history of Jesus, just as a lock of complicated and absolutely peculiar structure corresponds with its key. Hence again it follows that Christianity is the religion of God. 4. The Deity is a Being of moral perfections; and Christianity is the instrument by which he so transforms unregenerate men, that they come to render unto him the fear, honour, and love, which are his due—to shew forth his moral attributes in their own conduct—and to enjoy a substantial and enduring happiness—whence the conclusion is again safely deduced, that our religion is *divine* and *true*.

The Scriptures are a divinely authorised record of Christian truth. The inspiration of the writers of the Old Testament is evinced by the clear declarations, on that subject, of the apostles and of Christ himself. The inspiration of the writers of the New Testament, and especially of the apostles, is plainly recorded in the gospel history already proved to be true ; and these historica! testimonies to the divine origin of the Scriptures are abundantly confirmed by the internal evidences derived from their holy, wise, harmonious, and practically efficacious, contents. The difficulties in Holy Writ are analogous to those to be observed in natural science ; but to the simple-hearted, sincere, and devotional reader, and as far as relates to those things which appertain to our salvation, the inspired writings are *plain and intelligible*.

The Bible is replete with important information, respecting God, ourselves, and Jesus Christ. 1. The various attributes and perfections of the Deity are described, in the sacred volume, with a force and precision which clearly indicate the divine origin of the book. More especially the Scriptures represent the Deity as perfectly pure and just, so that he utterly abhors all sin, and will assuredly punish those who continue under its influence. Without holiness none shall see God. 2. Respecting ourselves, the Scriptures declare, that we are endued with a body and a soul—that the soul lives after death—that the dead will be raised in a spiritual body—that, in the world to come, we shall be rewarded or punished, and be happy or miserable for ever, *according to our works*—that we are fallen from the image of God in which

Adam was created—that we are naturally prone to sin, and universally sinners—and that *of ourselves*, therefore, we can entertain no hope of salvation. 3. Respecting Jesus Christ, we read in the Bible—that he is the *Son* or *Word* of God, who was with God from everlasting—that all things were made by him—that he is one with the Father, and, *therefore, himself God or Jehovah*—that he became incarnate, and assumed the nature of man, dwelt upon earth, died on the cross, rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and will come again to the judgment of quick and dead.

To the question—for what *equivalent* purpose SUCH AN ONE should so marvellously humble himself, as to come into this world, assume our nature, and die on the cross—the answer has been given: “*To supply all our spiritual need:—to bestow upon us not only information, precept, and example, but indemnity and cure.*” This answer is explicitly confirmed by a multitude of passages selected from Holy Writ—by the perfectly accordant declarations of the prophets, of the angel Gabriel, of John the Baptist, of Christ himself, and of his apostles. These passages unfold in a luminous manner the whole doctrine of redemption, fully account for the great facts of the gospel, and show that between the *spiritual wants* of mankind, and the *mercies of God in Christ*, there is an entire congruity. Lastly, I have observed that we cannot avail ourselves of the promises and blessings of the gospel, otherwise than by that true and living faith in Jesus, by which we rely upon him as upon our only Saviour, and through the operation of which we be-

come new creatures, and bring forth the fruits of obedience, holiness, love, and peace.

Trusting, my dear friend, (and reader of every description) that thou hast acceded, step by step, to all the essential points detailed in the present argument, I will now venture to add the words of persuasion and exhortation.

I would intreat thee, in the first place, to cultivate an enlarged and abiding sense of the importance of eternal things—to *bring home* the doctrine, that the day is hastening upon us all, when we shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ; when all the secrets of our hearts shall be brought to light; when we shall render to the Judge of all flesh an account of the deeds done in the body; and when we shall either receive the boon of eternal happiness, or under the weight of our own corruptions, *sink down into never-ending woe*. And, in the second place, I would implore thy consideration of another truth equally indubitable—that in *that* day, it will only aggravate our condemnation, to have heard, understood, and approved, the word of the Lord, if we then shall be found to have persisted in refusing to follow its dictates.

Since it is through faith and obedience alone, that we can any of us escape the just judgments of God, and become the heirs of a blessed immortality, mayest THOU be enabled to BELIEVE and OBEY! Thy understanding is convinced of the truth of our holy religion, but rest not in a mere notional faith. Lay aside the evil *heart* of unbelief. Venture not to amuse thyself with mere speculation on the theory of Christianity,

but lay firm hold of its *substance*; and flee from the wrath to come. Remember that thou art a sinner unworthy of the love of God—wretched, and miserable, and blind, and poor, and naked. Confess thy transgressions unto the Lord; be broken down under the sense of them; and, well knowing that there is nothing in the fleeting scenes of this present life which can satisfy the aspirations of an immortal spirit, seek a sure refuge for a wounded and weary soul, in the bosom of Jesus. Cast thyself, just such as thou art, on the Mediator between God and man, “in whom are hid all the treasures,” not only of “wisdom and knowledge,” but of mercy, compassion, and love.

And fear not to take his yoke upon thee. Obey the law of Christ, as it is written in Scripture, and as it is engraven on the heart. Follow the Lamb “*whithersoever* he goeth.” Be not conformed to this world. “Be transformed, by the renewing” of thy mind, that thou mayest “prove what is that good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God.” Proceed with a firm, steady, determined step, from grace to grace, from strength to strength, and from holiness to holiness. Resign thyself wholly to *him* who has bought thee with a price. Finally, watch unto prayer, pray without ceasing—pray and faint not. Then, although the cross of Christ will, at times, be difficult to bear—although mockery and persecution will occasionally fall to thy lot—although thy own infirmities will often oppress thee—and although, in hours of comparative darkness, Satan will not fail to rage, to tempt, and to buffet, yet fear not, for *God will be with thee*. The “Shepherd

of Israel" will guide thee with the crook of his love. During the whole course of thy pilgrimage he will be thy friend, companion, and protector. He will pour forth his Spirit upon thee. He will scatter all thine enemies. For "mourning," he will bestow "the oil of joy;" for "ashes," "beauty;" for "the spirit of heaviness," "the garment of praise;" for distress and conflict, "*the peace of God which passeth all understanding.*" And, in the end, (if thy faith shall have kept pace with knowledge, and thy virtue with faith) he will administer unto thee, through the blood of his covenant, a *sure* and *abundant* entrance into the mansions of rest and glory.

And now a single additional observation will bring this Letter to its conclusion. If we are taught to mourn over our sins, we shall mourn also over the sins of mankind: we shall be humbled before God with deep sorrow of heart, when we reflect on the forgetfulness of their Creator, the falsehood, lasciviousness, malice, cruelty, and bloodshed, which are still so fearfully prevalent among the sons of Adam. But every one who is brought to a right understanding of the gospel of Christ knows that, in its doctrines, as they are humbly accepted and practically applied, there is a *powerful remedial principle*, by which moral evil of every description may be counteracted and subdued. Let us then pray for the hastening of that day when the dominion of Jesus shall extend "from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth,"⁵ for under its blessed influence, a mighty change shall still be wrought in the

⁵ Ps. lxxii, 8.

character and condition of men. "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks : nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more ;" ⁶ "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling, together, and a little child shall lead them They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, (saith the Lord), for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." ⁷ *Then shall this moral wilderness become a fruitful field.* "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them ; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice, even with joy and singing ; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon ; they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God. . . . And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness : the unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for those ; the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon ; it shall not be found there : but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads : they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." ⁸

⁶ Isa. ii, 4.⁷ Isa. xi, 6—9.⁸ Isa. xxxv, 1, 2, 8—10.

While, then, my dear Friend, we experience in ourselves a redemption from sin, *through faith in the Son of God*; and look forward to the universal extension of the same purifying principle, let us prostrate ourselves in all humility before the everlasting Jehovah, and exclaim with the apostle, “Thanks be to God for his UNSPEAKABLE GIFT!”

HINTS
ON
THE PORTABLE EVIDENCE
Of Christianity.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God:" 2 TIM. iii, 16.

"He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself:" JOHN v, 10.

FOURTH EDITION.

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P R E F A C E.

IN the course of a social evening's conversation, I heard that eminent Christian philosopher, Dr. Chalmers, make some instructive remarks to the following effect :

“The historical evidences of Christianity are abundantly sufficient to satisfy the scrutiny of the learned, and they are within the reach of all well educated persons. But the internal evidences of the truth have a still wider influence, for they are open and intelligible to every sincere inquirer. Every man who reads the Bible with attention, and observes the value and excellence of the book—every man who compares what it says of mankind with his own experience, and marks the fitness of its mighty scheme of doctrine to his own spiritual need as a sinner in the sight of God—is furnished with practical proof of the divine origin of our religion. I love this evidence ; I call it the *portable* evidence of Christianity.”

My object, in this little volume, is to develop these views ; and I trust no apology is required for my adopting the term by which Dr. Chalmers so happily distinguished his favourite kind of evidence. The Bible is a portable book ; and the Christian, whether at home or on a journey, ought always to keep it within his reach, and make use of it as his daily companion. Again,—whatsoever be our place or circumstances, we all carry about with us a knowledge of our own experience.

The subject naturally divides itself into two parts. In the first place, the Bible, considered alone, affords, in the purity, dignity, harmony, and practical importance, of its contents, sufficient evidences of its own divine origin. And secondly, the accordance of the truths revealed in Scripture, with what we know in ourselves, and observe in the world around us, and more especially the adaptation of the gospel of Christ to the condition of fallen man, supplies us with a further conclusive proof, that the Creator and moral Governor of the Universe, is the Author of the Bible.

While multitudes, in the present day, even among the working classes of society, are obtaining some acquaintance with useful science, it is most desirable that as far as possible, they should be instructed also in the evidences of Christianity. Even those of a critical and historical nature, might without much difficulty be made far more familiar to persons of little education, than they are at present ; and the more they are examined, the more clearly will it be discovered that Christianity, in its original and purely scriptural form, rests upon a basis which can never be shaken.

In the mean time I trust that it will not be useless to invite the attention of the public to some of those proofs of the truth of our holy religion, which lie immediately before us, and which, where the Bible is freely circulated, are within the reach of every serious and reflecting mind.

I cannot however satisfactorily enter upon my argument, without premising one general remark. Although in a day so marked as the present by unsettled and floating opinions, it is peculiarly desirable that Christians should be able to give a reason—and even many reasons—for the hope which is in them, it must not be inferred from hence, that the religion of Jesus stands in need of apology or defence. While its advocates are at all times ready to state the reasons of their unalterable convictions, they

by no means intend to give countenance to the notion that the truth of Christianity is debatable ground.

As the existence and moral government of the Deity are truths which bear with a native and resistless force on every candid mind, and need no arguments to prove them, so the unparalleled goodness of Christianity at once impresses us with its *truth*. I conceive it to be a first principle in morals, wrought by the hand of God into our very nature, and requiring no other evidence of its reality, that *what is good, is true*.

The real source of the proneness of man to reject revealed religion, is to be found in those propensities of the heart which are opposed to all goodness. Corrupt and rebellious as we are, we shrink from the piercing rays of the Sun of Righteousness. We cannot bear to have our inclinations thwarted, our passions subdued, our independence led captive, and our pride levelled with the dust. “This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.”¹

¹ John iii, 19.

H I N T S.

PART I.

THE BIBLE CONSIDERED ALONE.

IN endeavouring to unfold “the portable evidence of Christianity,” it will be well for us, in the first instance, to consider the Bible as the single object of our attention, and to take a brief view of its native, inherent, claim to divine authority. Were that sacred volume more of a daily companion and intimate friend to us—did the words which it contains dwell in our hearts—did we “bind” them “for a sign” upon our hands, and as “frontlets” between our eyes—our lingering doubts respecting Christianity and its doctrines would soon fade away. Not a trace of them would be left to mar our peace or to interrupt our communion with God.

It ought however to be premised, that, if we bring to the investigation of Scripture a haughty and self-sufficient spirit, we shall be little likely to form a just estimate of its contents. It is a marked and peculiar feature of the Christian system,—and one which strongly indicates the wisdom of its Contriver—that

God hides the secrets of his love from “the wise and prudent” (that is from those who account themselves such) and reveals them unto “babes.”¹ “The meek will he guide in judgment; and the meek will he teach his way.”² Let the humble man study the Scriptures in the remembrance of his own ignorance. Let him, as a matter of course, expect difficulties—knots which he cannot untie—just as every sound philosopher expects them in his investigation of nature. Let him remember that the whole scheme of Christianity professes to be ordained of God, and to be revealed to man, for *practical purposes*. Let him, in his perusal of the book, honestly endeavour to apply its contents to these its professed ends. Above all, under a sense of his weakness and liability to error, let him fervently pray God to correct and enlighten his understanding and to assist him in his search after truth. What will be the consequence?

I believe it will inevitably be this—that the more he becomes acquainted with the Scriptures, the clearer will be his view of their beauty, their harmony, and their strength; and the more deeply will he therefore be impressed with the belief that they are the oracles of God.

¹ Matt. xi, 25.

² Ps. xxv, 9.

SECTION I.

ON THE EXCELLENCE OF SCRIPTURE, AND ON THE ACCORDANCE
OF ITS PARTS.

THERE are no writings in the world, which contain history so important, poetry so sublime, delineation of character so instructive, devotional compositions so tender, and maxims so wise and useful, as the Bible. But the moral and spiritual *force* of the sacred volume is that which chiefly serves to fasten its contents on the mind of every honest inquirer, whether more or less educated, and to produce a settled conviction of its divine origin.

No man can be in the habit of reading the Scriptures with attention, and in a humble devotional spirit, without finding himself the better for the book. It will be the means of exalting his views of the Supreme Being ; of awakening his love for the Redeemer ; of animating his desires after holiness ; and of imbuing him with charity towards his fellow men. Thus, on the general principle alluded to in our preface, that *what is good, is true*, his mind will gradually be given up to an unfeigned belief of its contents.

It is especially worthy of remark, that many parts of Scripture are so full of instruction—the mine is so

deep and so richly stored—that the treasure is never exhausted. A man may return to the same passage a thousand times, yet never with the feeling of satiety; seldom perhaps without deriving from it some fresh lesson, important to the religious life. This may be regarded as one of the sure marks of inspiration.

Another mark of it is the concentration of much and varied instruction within a very small compass. A single verse, or part of a verse, penned by a prophet or an apostle—singular and original in its character—will often furnish materials for useful and edifying thought to an almost unlimited extent. What a vast field for profitable reflection, for example, may be found in the declaration of David, that “*the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory;*”¹ and again, that “*He will beautify the meek with salvation;*”² or in the words of Wisdom, “*All they that hate me, love death;*”³ or in the doctrine of Paul, “*To be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace;*”⁴ or in the address of Peter, “*Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ;*”⁵ or in the saying of John, “*God is love.*”⁶ A surprising number and variety of important ideas are suggested to the mind by each of these passages, and by a multitude of others of a like character. It is true that similar modes of expression are now often used, by uninspired writers; but this circumstance only strengthens our argument, because the Bible is

¹ Ps. lxxxiv, 11.

² Ps. cxlix, 4.

³ Prov. viii, 36.

⁴ Rom. viii, 6.

⁵ 1 Pet. i, 2.

⁶ 1 John iv, 16.

the original fountain, from which they are derived. It is a text book for moral and religious teaching, which knows no rival, and to the use and application of which there appears to be no limit.

We cannot calculate the amount of good which has been effected since the Christian era, by the ministry of the gospel and by the works of religious authors. Yet no preachers of the gospel, no writers on religion, have ever added any improvement to Christianity as it was first revealed. Whatsoever, in the preaching or writings of modern Christians, has any tendency to convert, purify, and save the souls of men, never fails to be found, in its original form, in the Bible. How can we account for this unquestionable fact, except by the inspiration of the sacred writers?

The divine origin of Scripture becomes yet more evident, when we reflect upon its larger masses. The Psalms of David, for example, were composed a thousand years before the Christian era; yet, even now, after the lapse of so many ages, they are daily food to multitudes, and are found applicable to Christian experience, the deepest and the most various. Does not this fact afford a palpable proof that they were given by inspiration?

When we meditate on the simplicity, harmony, and edifying tendency, of the four gospels, and on the information which they contain respecting the life, character, doctrine, death, and resurrection of Christ, our minds are filled with light; and we cannot refuse to allow that these unrivalled memorials were given to us of God.

I conceive that no man can truly imbibe the meaning of Paul, Peter, and John, in the doctrinal parts of their epistles, without arriving at a strong conviction, that doctrines so distinct and various, yet so exactly balanced—so novel and extraordinary, yet so satisfactory to the judgment, and so influential on the heart, must have flowed from the source of all knowledge and wisdom. Nor would any candid mind be likely to form a different opinion respecting the rich and full morality, which is to be found in the preceptive parts of those epistles, and in that most practical of treatises, the epistle of James.

As a last example we may mention the Revelation; for although that remarkable book abounds in difficulties, a fair consideration of its contents will convince us, that nothing but the pen of inspiration could have drawn such a picture of the then future destinies of the church, of the fearful struggle which she must still maintain against the powers of darkness, and of her complete victory and endless glory.

Thus, it appears, that both the smaller and larger divisions of the Bible bear evident marks of that divine wisdom from which they originated; but our convictions on the subject cannot fail to be greatly strengthened when we observe the harmony of sentiment and doctrine which pervades the mighty whole. The Bible consists of numerous distinct works,—historical, prophetical, and didactic,—composed at a variety of dates, by very many individuals independent of each other, who differed in character, circumstances and condition; and yet these writings all point in one direction, and combine in developing *one sys-*

tem of truth. It seems impossible to account for this general result, except by the fact, that their authors all wrote under the influence of the same Spirit.

“ Whence these agreeing truths ? or how or why
Should all conspire to cheat us with a lie ? ”

The harmony of Scripture is the more remarkable, because this system of truth was unfolded by degrees. While the successive revelations recorded in Scripture admirably coincide, they manifest a gradual progress towards perfect light. The moral principles which were revealed to our first parents, and of which there are many traces in the history of the patriarchs, were confirmed and reduced to a code, in the days of Moses ; and the law of expiation by sacrifice, of which, from the very date of the fall, mankind had possessed some clear notions, was, at the same period, defined and detailed. Yet, the light bestowed on Moses and his followers, with regard to morals, was preparatory to a still more extensive exhibition of them under the gospel ; and the types and shadows with which the Jewish ritual abounded, were fulfilled in the Saviour of men made manifest in the flesh.

This fact suggests the remark, that, besides the general harmony of Scripture, there are distinct parts of the Bible, composed at long intervals of time, which *answer* to each other, just as the image of a man, in a mirror, answers to the living form.

Who can deliberately compare the types of the law with their great antitype as revealed in the gospel, and take a fair view, in succession, of the shadow and the substance, of the figure and the reality, without

perceiving in the agreement of the one with the other, and in the keeping of the whole picture, the unquestionable evidence of truth?

Take for example the lamb of the passover, a male without spot or blemish, not a bone of which was to be broken; and call to mind that the sprinkling of its blood on the door posts of the Israelite, was the appointed means of ensuring his safety from the power of the destroyer. What a lively figure of the Lamb of God, whose blood, sprinkled on the heart, arrests the hand of justice and protects from the penalty of sin! Take again the serpent of brass which Moses lifted up on a pole, that the Israelites, mortally diseased from the bite of the fiery serpents, might look upon it in faith and live.⁷ Who does not perceive in this circumstance an expressive shadow of Christ lifted up on the cross, to whom the believer, wounded by Satan, poisoned with sin, directs the eye of his soul, and is healed, and lives for ever?⁸

Peculiarly pertinent, as shadows of the great doctrines of the gospel, were the ceremonies practised under the Mosaic law, on the day of atonement. Previously to the services of the day, the high priest puts off his gorgeous vestments and clothes himself in humble yet holy linen garments,—offers up a bullock for his own sins or errors, and a goat for those of the people,—enters once for all during the year, into the holy of holies, where were the Cherubim and the glory of God's presence,—confesses the sins of the Israelites over the head of a second goat, which is suffered to

⁷ Num. xxi, 9.

⁸ John iii, 14.

escape with his figurative burthen into an uninhabited wilderness,—and finally resumes his splendid apparel and the usual condition of his office. In the mean time the bodies of the slain victims are burnt *without the camp*.⁹

So the Son of God, the high priest of the Christian's profession, divests himself of his pristine majesty—assumes his pure yet lowly human nature—suffers “without the gate”—offers up one all-sufficient sacrifice for sin,—carries away into oblivion the transgressions of his people—enters in “once for all” into the holiest place, where the angels dwell in glory—there appears in the presence of God, for us,—and, having made peace by the blood of his cross, is exalted at the right hand of the Father in all his original honour and dignity. There is still another point of coincidence which is worthy of notice. On that day of figurative atonement, the Israelites were commanded by a “statute for ever” to *afflict their souls*. And by a decree, alike perpetual, *repentance* is the indispensable accompaniment of reconciliation with God, through faith in the blood of Jesus.

It cannot be believed that these and many similar resemblances between the law and the gospel are the result of chance. Still less can we imagine, either that the Jews practised these ceremonies, and ascribed them to their forefathers, in order to recommend the gospel, or that the apostles invented the gospel as a key to the ritual of the law. Significant as that ritual is seen to be under the light of the Christian revelation, there is nothing in it which could have led to

⁹ Lev. xvi.

the discovery, much less to the invention, of those mysterious and elevated doctrines, the incarnation and atonement of Christ. The plain fact is, that these ancient rites were "shadows of good things to come." The shadow and its substance were each made known in its season, and the correspondence between the two affords an incontrovertible evidence that God was the Author of them both.

The general correctness of the history of God's ancient people is confirmed by a variety of collateral proofs, supplied by the chronicles of other nations; nor will it be doubted by the reflecting reader of Scripture, who marks the natural and circumstantial character of the whole narration and the accordance of its several parts. Taking it for granted then, that this history is what it professes to be *a narrative of facts*, we may observe one feature in it, which distinguishes it from every other history in the world, and plainly denotes its divine origin. In many of its particulars it is capable of a typical or spiritual application, and, through this medium, is fraught with instruction of the most important and enduring nature. This remark applies with peculiar force to the lives and characters of certain individuals.

In Melchizedek, the "king of righteousness" and "of peace," and priest of the Most High, to whom Abraham gave tithes of all his spoil; in the virtuous Joseph, who was persecuted and sold, and who, through great affliction arrived at greater glory, so that both his friends and his enemies bent the knee before him; in Moses, the meekest of men, the law-

giver and leader of Israel—the mediator between God and his people ; in Joshua, who drove out their enemies from before them, and introduced them to the quiet possession of the land of promise ; in David, the man after God's "own heart," that deep yet patient sufferer, that exalted king, that unconquered captain of the armies of Israel ; in Solomon, the "king's son," whose peaceable government extended on every side, and whose wisdom pervaded the thousand secrets both of grace and nature—the student of Scripture will not fail to trace the types of that Saviour, in whom all these characteristics were afterwards so admirably combined and perfected. Whatsoever things are good and glorious, in the history and character of these real yet typical persons, find a common focus in Christ their antitype.

Again, let such a student reflect on the deliverance of the Hebrews from the land of Egypt, and from the tyranny of Pharaoh ; on their long continued wanderings in the wilderness ; on the manna from the skies and the water from the rock, by which they were sustained and refreshed ; on the fiery cloud which guided them on their journey ; on the miraculous passage of the nation over Jordan ; and on their final settlement in the land of Canaan flowing with milk and honey. What Christian does not derive from this narrative a delightful kind of instruction, while he is reminded by it of the deliverance of Christ's followers—the whole nation of believers—from the tyranny of Satan and from the corruptions of the world ; of their pilgrimage on the earth ; of the spiritual bread which they eat ; of the spiritual water

which they drink ; of the rock which accompanies them ; of the light which guides them ; of the death through which they must pass ; and of the glorious and delightful rest—the heaven of abundant blessedness—into which they shall finally enter ?

Historical facts, thus filled with an internal weight of instruction, and pointing to the vast realities of the spiritual world, must have arisen in the peculiar providence of God ; and the religion with which they are connected, must be *His* religion. The accordances of revelation are like those of nature—numerous, unconcerted by man, peculiar, precise. Both bespeak, as their only true origin, the wisdom and goodness of God.

SECTION II.

ON PROPHECY COMPARED WITH HISTORY.

THE religion of the Bible is attested by nothing more clearly than by prophecy compared with its fulfilment. Since the whole course of events arises out of the counsels of God, and since those counsels are secret and unfathomable, we may rest assured that an actual knowledge of the future is an attribute which belongs to Him *alone*. Prophecies, therefore, which relate to circumstances so distant, peculiar, or complex, as to lie beyond the reach of conjecture, and which nevertheless are exactly fulfilled, can be traced by any reasonable mind only to the Spirit of our Heavenly Father, to whom all things are known, whether past, present, or future. Such prophecies are numerous in the Bible.

In order to take a full view of this branch of evidence, we must be well acquainted with history, and with the present condition of various places and nations. The student of prophecy, for example, will of course be led to compare the predictions of the Lord Jesus, respecting the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, with the relation which the *historian Jose-*

phus has given of these events; and he will observe that complete agreement between the two, which clearly establishes the divine origin of the prophecy. Evidence equally strong but still more extensive, arises from a comparison of the descriptions given by modern travellers of Babylon, Tyre, Arabia, Judæa, and many other cities and countries, with the prophecies respecting them contained in the Old Testament.¹ Again, in the scattered condition of the Jews themselves, and in the contempt and persecution to which they have been so long exposed, persons even of very limited information may find a *standing proof* that Moses and other holy men of old, who foretold these things, “spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”

But there are parts of the evidence derived from prophecy which, independently of any extraneous source of information, stand complete in the Bible itself. Thus the promise made to Abraham, that his seed should be like the stars of heaven for multitude, and should inherit the land of Canaan, was accomplished in the course of centuries, and the Bible contains a full account of the fact. To substantiate this proof, nothing is required but a comparison of parts of Genesis with the book of Joshua.

When Joshua had destroyed Jericho, he said, “Cursed be the man before the Lord that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he shall lay the found-

¹ The particulars of this comparison are admirably unfolded by Alexander Keith, in his little work, entitled “Evidence of the Truth of the Christian Religion derived from the literal fulfilment of prophecy.” 1 vol. 12mo.

ation thereof in his first-born, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it.”² This prophecy was delivered about 1450 years before Christ; and the first book of Kings contains an account of its exact fulfilment more than 500 years afterwards. The reign under which the circumstances took place, and the names of all the parties concerned, are there faithfully recorded.³

When King Jeroboam was sacrificing to his idols in Bethel (B. C. 975,) a man of God came and “cried against the altar in the word of the Lord, and said, O altar, altar, thus saith the Lord; Behold a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name, and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places, that burn incense upon thee, and men’s bones shall be burnt upon thee.”⁴ That this prophecy was actually delivered according to this narration, we have no reason whatever to doubt. Of its fulfilment, about 350 years afterwards, the subsequent history of the Jews contains a clear account. There we read that Josiah was born of the seed of David according to the prophecy, and that he destroyed Jeroboam’s altar at Bethel; “and as Josiah turned himself he spied the sepulchres that were in the mount, and sent and took the bones out of the sepulchres, and burnt them upon the altar and polluted it, according to the

² Josh. vi, 26.

³ 1 Kings xvi, 34.—“In his days did Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho; he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his firstborn, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the Lord which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun.”

⁴ 1 Kings xiii, 2.

word of the Lord which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these words.”⁵

Jeremiah’s predictions of the invasion of Judæa and the destruction of Jerusalem by the armies of Nebuchadnezzar, of the captivity of the Jews in Babylon during seventy years, and of their peaceful return to their own land, were utterly disregarded by his hearers as improbable and absurd. Yet they were all accomplished in the course of a century, and subsequent historians or prophets, who probably had no connection with Jeremiah, give a clear account of the events by which they were fulfilled.⁶

Cyrus, King of Persia, the conqueror of Babylon and the deliverer of the Jews, was prophesied of by name nearly two centuries before his birth. In the counsels of God he was pre-ordained to be the Lord’s shepherd, to perform all his pleasure—“even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built, and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.”⁷ Such were the words of the prophecy delivered by Isaiah; and who can

⁵ 2 Kings xxiii, 16.—There is a point in this example, which affords a striking evidence of its authenticity. The prophecy states that the priests were to be offered on the altar, and men’s bones burnt thereon. The history mentions *only* the burning of the bones of the priests on the altar. The history unfolds the true meaning of the prediction, which was that the priests should be offered on the altar *by the burning of their skeletons upon it*. Yet this *apparent difference* would surely have been avoided by a forger, had such an one either invented the history as a key to the prophecy, or composed the prophecy after the event had happened.

⁶ Compare Jer. i, 14, 15; vi, 1; xxxiv, 2; xxv, 8—11; xxx, 10; xxxiii, 7; with 2 Kings xxv; 2 Chron. xxxvi; Exra i; Dan. ix, 2.

⁷ Isa. xlv, 28; *comp.* xlv, 1—4.

wish for a more satisfactory account of their accomplishment than we find in the book of Ezra?

The genuineness of the books of the Old Testament and the general truth of its history being allowed (an allowance which no sound critic will refuse to make,) we have only to compare one part of that volume with another, in order to satisfy ourselves of the lucid character of these and many other prophecies, and of the exactness with which they have been fulfilled.

What could be more precise than the language in which our Lord foretold his own sufferings, death, and resurrection, the unfaithfulness of the apostle Peter, and the sending of the Holy Ghost the Comforter? And who can deny that the simple and explicit narrative of these events, contained in the New Testament itself, affords a satisfactory proof that Jesus was a true prophet?

These observations, however, apply with peculiar force to that wondrous line of prophecy which runs through the Old Testament, and which distinctly relates to the Messiah himself—that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head.⁸ Prophets who lived in various ages, and were wholly independent of each other—persons of different characters and conditions—are found severally contributing distinct portions to the general *stock of information* respecting the deliverer who was to come. Through their means the church is furnished with a prophetic description of its Head and Saviour, in a marvellous degree precise and comprehensive. His divine name and nature⁹

⁸ Gen. iii, 15.

⁹ Isa. ix, 6; Jer. xxiii, 6.

—his incarnation in the nature of man¹—the nation,² the tribe,³ and the family⁴ from which he was to spring—the preaching of his forerunner⁵—his virgin mother⁶—the place of his birth⁷—the date of his coming⁸—his righteous character⁹—the meekness, humility, and kindness of his disposition¹—his matchless miracles²—the unbelief and contempt to which he was exposed³—the treason of his familiar friend⁴—his vicarious sufferings and violent death⁵—the peculiar circumstances by which it was attended; for example, the piercing of his hands and feet,⁶ the scornful motions and taunts of his enemies,⁷ the parting of his garments, the casting of lots for his vesture,⁸ and the vinegar given him to drink,⁹—his resurrection¹—his ascension²—his intercession³—his eternal priesthood⁴—his reign of glory⁵—are all delineated by the pencil of prophecy.

Let the student of Scripture compare this delineation with the *history* of Jesus Christ as unfolded in the New Testament, and in the correspondence between the one and the other—in the perfect fitting-in of their respective parts, both prominent circumstances and minute particulars—he will find an evidence of the truth of his religion, of which the cavils of infidelity will never be able to deprive him.

¹ Gen. iii, 15.² Gen. xxii, 18.³ Gen. xlix, 10.⁴ Isa. xi, 1.⁵ Isa. xl, 3; Mal. iii, 1.⁶ Isa. vii, 14.⁷ Mic. v, 2.⁸ Dan. ix, 25.⁹ Isa. xi, 5.¹ Isa. xlii, 2, 3; 1, 6.² Isa. xxxv, 5, 6.³ Isa. liii, 1—3.⁴ Ps. xli, 9.⁵ Isa. liii, 3—7.⁶ Ps. xxii, 16.⁷ Verses 7, 8.⁸ Verse 18.⁹ Ps. lxxix, 21.¹ Ps. xvi, 10.² Ps. lxxviii, 18.³ Isa. liii, 12.⁴ Ps. cx, 1.⁵ Dan. vii, 14, &c.

The prophecies respecting Christ, and the history of our Saviour in the New Testament, have been elsewhere compared to a lock and key, of a structure so complex and extraordinary as to have no parallel in the world, and yet answering to each other with an easy and perfect exactness.⁶ We may now observe, in addition, that as the lock and key are passive under the hand of the mechanic who forms them, and have no power or tendency whatsoever to produce each other, so it is certain that neither were these prophecies produced by the events, nor the events occasioned by the prophecies.

1. So precise and extensive a correspondence between prophecy and history, as is observable in the present example, might possibly induce a suspicion that the predictions had been forged after the events had happened, and were, in fact, a consequence of the history. But such a suspicion will readily vanish when the subject is examined. The scholar is well aware that the existence of these prophecies long before the date of the history is proved, first, by quotations made from the Old Testament, not only by the evangelists and apostles, but by other Jewish writers, such as Philo and Josephus; secondly, by a Greek version of the whole Hebrew Scriptures made more than two hundred years before the Christian era; and thirdly, by the very language in which these prophecies were written—that pure Hebrew, which, when Christ was upon earth, the Jews had long since ceased either to speak or to write.

⁶ Essays on Christianity, III, 2nd Edit. p. 60.

But we have internal evidence of the same truth which is open to every discerning eye. The prophecies respecting our Saviour in the Old Testament are found scattered over a wide surface, and in numerous separate books. Some of them are brief declarations obliquely introduced—thrown in as hints by the way—and, although full of meaning, obscurely expressed. Sometimes they are mingled with predictions respecting the temporal concerns of the Jews; sometimes they have a subordinate application to some figurative character—such as David or Solomon; and as a whole they are curiously worked into that system of types, which may be described as the peculiar genius of the religion of the Hebrews.

Had it not been for the key with which God has provided us in the New Testament, and which searches the most curious and hidden recesses of the lock, many parts of that lock would for ever have continued latent. It is an important principle, of which we ought never to lose sight in reference to Scripture prophecy, that it can be fully interpreted only by its events. When the history and doctrine of the New Testament are brought to bear upon these predictions, we immediately perceive their relation to a single subject, and not the slightest doubt can any longer be entertained respecting their true meaning. Nevertheless, such is their peculiar position and construction, that no man either would or could have forged them.⁷ Any attempt to compose these prophecies

⁷ What a striking illustration of these remarks is afforded us by the following remarkable prophecy respecting our Saviour; “His visage was so marred, more than any man, and his form more than

and palm them on the world after the date of the events to which they relate, would have been unlikely and absurd, and success in such an undertaking *utterly impossible*.

2. It has often been observed that prophecies which relate to circumstances dependent on the will and power of man, and on the working of human passions, have an inherent tendency to accomplish themselves. Now it is certain that there was no such tendency in those respecting Christ. The incarnation, miracles, resurrection, and ascension, of the Holy One of Israel were events which no human power could either hasten or delay. And his sufferings and atoning death were brought about through the instrumentality of his enemies—persons who were so far from rightly applying the prophecies, that they utterly disregarded and despised the truths which many of them contained. When the Jews refused to believe in Jesus, and rejected their only Saviour; when they led him as a lamb to the slaughter; when they pierced his hands and his feet; when they gave him vinegar mingled with gall to drink; when they mocked him as he was hanging on the cross; when they consigned his body to the rich man's tomb—they little thought

the sons of men; *so shall he sprinkle many nations!*" Isaiah iii, 14, 15. This strange combination of ideas was probably quite unintelligible both to the prophet and his hearers. But who can *now* doubt either the meaning or the divine origin of the prediction? It is the New Testament which teaches us that the sufferings of Jesus were the appointed means not only of our reconciliation with God, but of our obtaining that gift of the Holy Spirit, with which, from his throne of glory, he sprinkles all his believing followers.—See Acts ii, 23—33.

that they were affording to the church in all generations, unquestionable proofs that he was the true Messiah.

Since then the prophecies respecting Christ and the events of his history precisely correspond, and since it is certain that the events did not produce the prophecies, nor the prophecies the events, no alternative remains but to ascribe them both to the wisdom and power of God.

SECTION III.

ON THE SUPREME BEING.

EVERY man who reasons fairly from the premises with which nature furnishes us, will confess, that the contrivances with which we are surrounded prove the existence of an all-wise Contriver ; that their uniform tendency shows the benevolence of God ; that the moral character of his government is made known, to a considerable extent, in the perceptible order of his providence ; and that his holiness may be inferred from the very nature of that law which he has written on the hearts of all men. Yet it must be allowed, that it is chiefly through revelation that we are thus led to reason from creation and providence, and that merely natural religion, even with the additional light of tradition, has left the heathen world, in all ages, in a state of great darkness respecting the Supreme Being.

Surely then it is a convincing evidence of the divine origin of the Holy Scriptures, that this darkness is removed wherever the sacred volume is known ; and that prophets and apostles have supplied us with an account of the Deity, so luminous and complete, that

philosophy itself can demand no addition to it. The several particulars of that account must be familiar to the mind of every serious Christian, and ought to be the frequent subject of his thoughts and contemplation. They may be briefly summed up as follows :

God is *one*. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is *one* Lord."¹ "There is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me."²

He is the *eternal one*—Jehovah—a name which denotes that he exists absolutely and independently. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come."³ "Even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God."⁴

He *created the universe*—formed it out of nothing. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."⁵ "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth."⁶

He is therefore *omnipotent*. "I know that thou canst do every thing."⁷ "The invisible things of God from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead."⁸ He is also *infinitely skilful*. "He hath made the earth by his power; he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath

¹ Deut. vi, 4.

² Isa. xlv, 22; *comp.* Matt. iv, 10; 1 Cor. viii, 5, 6.

³ Rev. i, 8.

⁴ Ps. xc, 2; *comp.* Isa. xlv, 6; James i, 17; Exod. iii, 14.

⁵ Gen. i, 1.

⁶ Ps. xxxiii, 6—9; *comp.* Isa. xl, 12; xlv, 7; Ps. cxlviii, 1—5.

⁷ Job xlii, 2.

⁸ Rom. i, 20.

stretched out the heaven by his *discretion*.”⁹ The same attributes he displays in re-production, in supplying the wants of his creatures, and in maintaining the perpetual order of nature. “He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man;”¹ “Thou sendest forth thy spirit and they are created; and thou renewest the face of the earth.”² “In him we live and move and have our being.”³

God is the sole *Ruler* and *Disposer* of the universe which he has made; and he conducts the order of all events with perfect *wisdom*. He is the “blessed and only potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords.”⁴ “The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all.”⁵ “Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever, for *wisdom* and might are his; and he changeth the times and the seasons; he removeth kings and setteth up kings.”⁶ “O the depth of the riches both of the *wisdom* and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!”⁷

“God is a *Spirit* ;”⁸ “dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen or can see.”⁹ He is also *omnipresent*. “Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?”¹ “Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art

⁹ Jer. x, 12.¹ Ps. civ, 14.² Verse 30.³ Acts xvii, 28.⁴ 1 Tim. vi, 15.⁵ Ps. ciii, 19; *comp.* Dan. vii, 9, 10.⁶ Dan. ii, 20, 21.⁷ Rom. xi, 33; *comp.* Eph. i, 7, 8.⁸ John iv, 24.⁹ 1 Tim. vi, 16; *comp.* 1 Tim. 17; John i, 18.¹ Jer. xxiii, 24.

there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there, &c.”²

He *knows all things*—the past, the present, and the future; “known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.”³ “His understanding is infinite.”⁴ “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.”⁵ He perceives the secret thoughts and intentions of his intelligent creatures. “The Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts; &c.”⁶ neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight.”⁷

Such are the declarations of Scripture respecting what are called the natural attributes of Jehovah. His moral attributes are displayed, in the same book, with equal clearness.

God is *holy*. “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.”⁸ “The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.”⁹ He is “of purer eyes than to behold evil.”¹ “All that do unrighteously are an *abomination* unto the Lord thy God.”²

He is *just*, the *moral* Governor of the world, rewarding virtue and punishing vice. “Say ye to the righteous that it shall be well with him, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given him.”³ In the present world there are many

² Ps. cxxxix, 7—10.

³ Acts xv, 18.

⁴ Ps. cxlvii, 5.

⁵ 1 John i, 5.

⁶ 1 Chron. xxviii, 9.

⁷ Heb. iv, 13.

⁸ Isa. vi, 1—3; *comp.* Rev. iv, 8.

⁹ Ps. cxlv, 17.

¹ Hab. i, 13.

² Deut. xxv, 16.

³ Isa. iii, 10, 11.

apparent interruptions of God's retributive justice ; but the Scriptures teach us that in the world to come it will operate without hindrance and through all eternity. "He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."⁴ "And these (the wicked) shall go away into everlasting punishment ; but the righteous into life eternal."⁵

God is *equal*—"Without respect of persons," he "judgeth according to every man's work."⁶ "Is not my way equal, saith the Lord?"⁷ "God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him."⁸ The servant who "knew his Lord's will," and did it not, "shall be beaten with many stripes, but he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required."⁹

He is *good*, abounding in kindness towards his creatures, our bounteous Protector and Father. "The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord."¹ God "giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not . . . every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights."² "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."³ Yet his beneficence is directed, with peculiar effect, towards his obedient children, whom he supports and

⁴ Gal. vi, 8.⁵ Matt. xxv, 46.⁶ 1 Pet. i, 17.⁷ Ezek. xviii, 25.⁸ Acts x, 34, 35.⁹ Luke xii, 47, 48.¹ Ps. xxxiii, 5.² James i, 5, 17 ; *comp.* Ps. cxlv, 9 ; Acts xiv, 15—17.³ Matt. v, 45.

comforts under every trial, and whose afflictions he applies to their highest welfare. "But thou Israel art my servant, the seed of Abraham my friend fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God, I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right-hand of my righteousness."⁴ "All things work together for good to them that love God; to them who are the called according to his purpose."⁵

God is *merciful*; and his mercy is, of all his attributes, the most frequently alluded to in Scripture. "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin."⁶ "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."⁷ The mercy of God is nearly identical with his *love*, under the pure impulse of which towards our fallen world, "he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."⁸ "God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."⁹ "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we [^]dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ."¹

⁴ Isa. xli, 8—10; *comp.* Ps. xci, 1. ⁵ Rom. viii, 28.

⁶ Exod. xxxiv, 6, 7.

⁷ Isa. lv, 7; *comp.* Ps. cxxx, 4, 7; Lam. iii, 22; 1 John i, 9.

⁸ John iii, 16.

⁹ Rom. v, 8. ¹ Eph. ii, 4, 5; *comp.* 1 John, iv, 10.

Finally, He is *faithful* or *true*,—"The word of our God shall stand for ever."² "His truth endureth to all generations."³ "Also the strength of Israel will not lie."⁴ "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself."⁵ In this attribute, we have an unfailing warrant that his law is unalterable, that his judgments will be executed, that his mercies are sure, and that his promises are "yea" and "amen" for ever.

Such is Jehovah, as described in the sacred volume—the only true God, eternal, the Creator and Ruler of all things, a Spirit omnipresent, almighty, omniscient, perfectly wise; holy, just, equal, benevolent, long-suffering, merciful, and true. Now these divine attributes are blended, but not confused. They do not weaken, much less nullify each other, but, existing severally and unalterably in infinite strength, they meet and combine in perfect union.

This harmony and nice adjustment of the various attributes ascribed in Scripture to the Supreme Being must strike every reflecting mind. His sole existence from eternity coincides with his creating all things; his spirituality with his pervading all things; his omnipresence with his knowing all things. How dreadful would be his omnipotence were it not combined with perfect wisdom! And how worthy is it of all admiration, that although able to effect all things immediately by his *fat*, he ever makes use of means, that his wisdom may be made known to his rational creatures!

² Isa. xl, 8.³ Ps. c, 5.⁴ 1 Sam. xv, 29.⁵ 2 Tim. ii, 13; *comp.* Heb. x, 23; Ps. cxi, 9.

Were he not the omnipotent sovereign of the universe, he could not be its *moral* governor. Were he not omniscient, he could not render to every man according to his deeds. His holiness is the basis of his justice ; his justice is inseparably connected with his equity.

Above all, in the Christian doctrine of *atonement*, we find a solution of that most difficult moral problem—how God can forgive and save a sinful race, consistently with the due maintenance of his law. God is “just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”⁶ In sending his only-begotten Son into the world, to bear the penalty of our sins, he has shown forth, in glorious union, his holiness and his love—his abhorrence of sin, and his mercy to the sinner.

Now the information which the Bible gives, respecting the Supreme Being, whether considered as a harmonious whole, or viewed in its principal details, is to be found originally in the Bible *alone*. Whatsoever of correct theology is to be met with in the pages of modern Christians, or even deists, is borrowed from the sacred volume—a remark which also applies to all that is true in the religion of Mahomet.

With respect to the ancient heathen philosophers, their best notions respecting the Supreme Being were probably derived from original revelation, as well as from the light of reason and conscience. Yet these notions were fluctuating and imperfect, often tending on the one hand towards idolatry, and on the other, towards that absurd doctrine of pantheism, which identifies all created things with their Creator, and

⁶ Rom. iii, 26.

makes the universe God. To compare the theology even of Plato and Soerates, with that of Moses, David, or Isaiah, is to compare the shades of twilight, with the full blaze of day. When we consider, that the Athenians were a highly civilized people, remarkable for the cultivation of their mental powers, and that the Jews were comparatively unpolished and ignorant; it seems impossible to account for this difference by any thing short of the doctrine laid down by Paul—"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God."

This argument is addressed to the scholar. To the unlettered man we may safely appeal, on the simple ground that the account which he finds in the Bible of the Creator and Governor of the universe—the Father of every rational being—corresponds with his own sense of all that is holy and sublime. When he reflects on the strength and beauty of its several parts and on the harmony of the mighty whole, his soul is raised and illuminated. There is a sure witness in his own heart and understanding, that this account of God is true; and that, being true, it flows, not from the polluted springs of man's wisdom, but from the fountain of *all* truth, even from God himself.

SECTION IV.

ON THE MORAL LAW.

It is one of the properties of truth, that it bears to be examined from various points of view, and that its several features, under whatsoever light they are regarded, are found substantially to accord. What but truth can account for the undesigned and unforced, yet clear coincidence, between the moral attributes of God as revealed to us in Scripture, and the law communicated to mankind, through the same medium?

God is holy; and he requires of his creature man a corresponding purity of heart and conduct. He is true and faithful; and his law demands a universal integrity. He is just and equitable; and whatsoever power we have over others, as parents, as masters, or as magistrates, must be applied with even-handed justice and strict impartiality. He showers down upon us innumerable gifts, and, at the same time, commands us liberally to dispense the blessings which we receive. In his mercy he forgives our iniquities; and by his moral code, he binds us to forgive one another. Notwithstanding our ingratitude and rebellion, he continues to bless us both temporally and spiritually; he

suffers long and is kind ; and what are the parallel precepts of his law ?—that we should return good for evil, melt down our enemies with charity, and exercise towards all around us, meekness, patience, and forbearance. Finally, “God is *love* ;” and the Scripture teaches us, that “*love* is the fulfilling of the law.”

The moral law, as revealed in Scripture, partakes of the character of its Author, first, because it prescribes the practice of every virtue, and is therefore “holy, and just, and good ;”¹ and secondly, because it is “spiritual”²—insinuating itself into the heart, reaching the spirit, and convincing the understanding. It applies to all circumstances, comprehends all conditions, regulates all motives, directs and controuls all overt acts. No man who is acquainted with its precepts, and has observed their tendency, will refuse to set his seal to the following declaration : “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul ! the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple ; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart ; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes ; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever ; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold ; sweeter also than honey, and the honey comb. Moreover, by them is thy servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great reward.”³

The moral precepts contained in the writings of some of the ancient philosophers, especially in those

¹ Rom. vii, 12.

² Verse 14.

³ Ps. xix, 7—11.

of Plato and Cicero, appear to afford one evidence among many, that some traces of the law of God are to be found in the hearts of all men. Although, however, these philosophers were gifted with an insight into the beauty and reasonableness of virtue, it is possible that they might derive part of their information on morals indirectly from the Jews, or from original revelation; and after all, it must be confessed that their morality, like their theology, was both variable and defective. There were in it two fundamental wants producing a fearful void, which revelation alone could fill. It was destitute of a fixed standard, and of adequate motives.

The standard proposed by the Stoics was, the "eternal fitness of things;" by the Epicureans, "that which produces happiness;" and by the Academicians, "a resemblance to the highest good." Now it is quite evident that each of these notions, (not excepting the last, which has some shew of godliness,) leaves the whole subject a prey to the speculation and imagination of men; and therefore in a state of dark and hopeless uncertainty. It is the Bible, and the Bible only, which declares a standard of morals universally applicable to our need, and liable to no change. That standard is the revealed will or *law* of God. The voice of Christianity proclaims that only to be virtue which the law of God prescribes, and that only to be vice by which the law is broken.

In proportion as the standard of morals is variable or uncertain, the motives to action become inoperative; because they are not excited in the mind by any clear principle, or by any acknowledged authority;

and this is probably one principal reason why the practice of many of the wisest of the heathen fell so far short of their own theories of virtue and religion.

The desire of happiness, for example—the motive of the Epicurean philosophers—is in itself a strong one; yet as long as the line of conduct which produces the greatest happiness is left to be fixed by mere human wisdom, so long will this motive induce mankind to gratify their propensities, rather than deny themselves any present enjoyment for the sake of a possible future good.

But the motives to action, presented to us in Scripture, are of the most binding and influential nature. They are the *fear and love of God*. The Bible declares, that the law of righteousness is the law of the moral Governor of the universe, who made us, who has a right to dispose of us as he pleases, and who will render to every one of us according to our deeds. We are therefore prepared to understand the full force of the precept, “Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.”⁴ But the Being whom we are thus taught to fear is presented to us in Scripture as the object of our *love*, partly because he is in himself perfectly lovely—the spring and centre of all goodness,—but chiefly because he has so abundantly displayed his love and bounty towards ourselves.

Hence the first and great commandment of the law is this: “thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy

⁴ Eccles. xii, 13.

mind.”⁵ Christianity represents this commandment as lying at the foundation of all true morality, because, while it points out our first duty, it supplies us with a motive, which leads to the right performance of every other duty.

And here we may briefly remark, that the unfolding of the *law* of God keeps pace, in Scripture, with the revelation of his *love*. For many ages before the birth of Moses, the traces of that great scheme of redemption, by which the love of God to man is *chiefly* displayed, were probably faint, and the known requirements of his law appear to have been limited. Under the Mosaic dispensation, the fore-shadows and prophecies of Christ became clearer and more abundant, and the moral law was strengthened and defined in proportion. Under the gospel, the love of God in Christ Jesus is explicitly revealed to us, and our *gratitude* thereby called into full action; and at the same time, the law is developed in all its spirituality, and in all its comprehensiveness. The extent of obedience required has been adapted, in every stage of the progress of truth, to the strength of the motive supplied. Yet that motive is always the same—*the love of God, who “first loved us.”*

Now I conceive that the infinite superiority of the sacred writers to all uninspired moralists, with respect to these main points—a fixed standard and adequate motives—affords a plain evidence that they wrote by inspiration—that theirs and theirs only is the religion of God.

But we shall come to the same conclusion, if we

⁵ Matt. xxii, 37.

examine the morality of Scripture in some of its details. Let the literary sceptic peruse our Saviour's sermon on the mount; and let him carefully reflect on its principles and its precepts.

Where shall he look, among the heathen, for a moral code like this? Where shall he lay his finger on any similar display of the nature of virtue? Where for example can he find any thing in the pages of Plato or Cicero, on the same *level* with the declaration, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God?" What would the Greek and Roman moralists furnish in the room of those nicely balanced sayings, each so important in its place, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven;" and "When thou doest thine alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth?" Or what would they enable us to substitute for the golden rule, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them?"

What mean the praises of meekness and patience, of submission and resignation, with which the Scripture abounds? what, the unceasing calls to communion with God,—to prayer and supplication? These are articles in the code of Christianity which are greatly opposed to the natural pride of man, and which vary, in the same degree, from the dictates of uninspired wisdom. Yet every one knows that they work well in practice; every one *ought* to acknowledge that they come from God.

There is no virtue on which the Scriptures more frequently insist than *humility*. "The sacrifices of

God," said David, "are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise,"⁶—a confession which remarkably agrees with the words of our Lord, "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven;"⁷ and again, "Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."⁸ The heathen moralists, who prided themselves on the excellence and dignity of their nature, would have been at a loss to comprehend these sayings. Such precepts are in fact directly opposed to their systems of philosophy. Yet what Christian is not aware that lowliness of mind and a broken spirit lie at the very root of moral excellence, and are useful beyond almost every other grace in promoting the order and happiness of our species?

Lastly, the *charity* enjoined upon us in the New Testament is very different from that arbitrary and uncertain benevolence, which is dictated by our natural feelings. Christian charity is indeed a virtue of heavenly birth and efficacy. It springs immediately from love for God, and having thus a right origin, it spreads towards the whole family of man, embraces enemies as well as friends, extends to thoughts as well as actions, and is steadily directed to the spiritual as well as temporal good of our neighbour. Were that second great commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," allowed to take the range assigned to it in the gospel, it would soon put an end to all malice, oppression, and bloodshed, and would

⁶ Ps. li, 17.

⁷ Matt. v, 3.

⁸ Luke xiv, 11.

convert this contentious world into one unvarying scene of harmony and peace.

In drawing a comparison between the ethics of the ancient philosophers, and the moral law contained in Scripture, we again address ourselves to the scholar. But in making our appeal to the man who reads his Bible *only*, we may inquire of him whether that law does not meet the best feelings of his mind, and coincide in all its parts with the decisions of his conscience ; whether it is not marvellously clear and comprehensive ; whether he does not find it, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, a safe guide in all the exigencies of life ; and lastly whether he is not happy and at rest precisely in the degree in which he conforms himself to its rules. If he be a person of integrity and reflection, he will be sure to answer these questions in the affirmative ; and in doing so he will furnish himself and others with a satisfactory evidence, that the law of Christianity is the LAW OF GOD.

SECTION V.

ON THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST.

THE harmonious view presented to us in Scripture of the moral attributes of God, and of the law by which he governs mankind, is truly *philosophical*; for the ethical virtues, such as holiness, justice, truth, and benevolence, can never change their tendencies. They are the same in their nature and character, whether they be regarded as the essential attributes of the Creator, or as the borrowed graces of the creature. Hence it follows that, as the face of a man is seen reflected in a glass, so are the moral attributes of the Deity seen reflected, under whatsoever diminution, in the conduct and character of those persons who believe and obey him. So it was with our first parents before their fall; and we may presume it to have been chiefly for this reason, that they are said to have been formed in the “image,” and after the “likeness of God.”¹

This image or likeness, which was lost in man by the fall, is restored to him by redemption; and believers in Jesus Christ again become, although at an

¹ Gen. i, 26.

immeasurable distance, "followers of God."² It is evident that on this doctrine is founded that awful precept, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."³

Since however the Almighty and his attributes are infinite and in various respects above our reach, and since we are called to the practice of many virtues which peculiarly belong to our dependent state as creatures, it is a delightful evidence of the wisdom and love of God, that in his incarnate Son he has provided us with a model, at once perfect, and accommodated to *all* our need. In him, the whole law of God is embodied, and as it were personified, for the instruction of mankind.

The first moral quality which we ought to notice in the character of our Saviour, is *purity of heart*. It was his own doctrine, that "blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."⁴ He is described by one apostle, as "a lamb without blemish and without spot;"⁵ and by another, as "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners."⁶ It is expressly declared that he "did no sin;"⁷ that "in him is no sin;"⁸ and the doctrine of his perfect purity is proved, by the fact, that his death was *expiatory*; for, except the offering be spotless, there can be no atonement made by it for sin.

With stainless purity, in Jesus, was united a perfect *integrity*. He was the "just," as well as "holy one."⁹ "Righteousness" was "the girdle of his loins

² Eph. v, 1.

³ Matt. v, 48.

⁴ Matt. v, 8.

⁵ 1 Pet. i, 19.

⁶ Heb. vii, 26.

⁷ 1 Pet. ii, 22.

⁸ 1 John iii, 5.

⁹ Acts iii, 14.

and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.”¹ No “guile” was “found in his mouth.”² He was himself “the truth.”³ He spake the plain truth to the most powerful of his enemies, and unmasked their hypocrisy in open day.

In publicly reproving iniquity, in pronouncing woes on Jerusalem and other rebellious cities, in driving the buyers and sellers out of the temple, and in calling upon all men to repent because the kingdom of heaven was at hand, he displayed an undaunted *courage*, and a resistless *zeal* for the honour of God. His disciples remembered that it was written of him, “The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up.”⁴

Yet these qualities were remarkably distinguished from rashness. During the course of his ministry he evinced a remarkable degree of *prudence*; and, in conformity to his own precept, was not only “harmless as the dove,” but “wise as the serpent.” He shunned the breath of popularity; suffered not his admirers to make him a king;⁵ forbade the premature publication of his office as the Messiah; and often retired into desert and solitary places. He would not tempt God by casting himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, when duty did not call for the sacrifice.⁶ The divine *wisdom* of Jesus was also manifested in the skill with which he silenced the cavils of his opposers, in the exquisite simplicity and appositeness of his parables, and in his converting every object which attracted his attention into a fresh channel for instruction.

¹ Isa. xi, 5.² 1 Pet. ii, 22.³ John xiv, 6.⁴ John ii, 17.⁵ John vi, 15.⁶ Matt. iv, 7.

Closely connected with the quality of courage, is that of *fortitude*. The latter virtue was displayed by our Lord in a wonderful manner after he had been betrayed into the hands of his enemies. The conflicts which he had undergone in the garden of Gethsemane, and his solemn communion there with his heavenly Father, appeared to be a preparation for that *calm fearlessness* which he afterward displayed in meeting a cruel and ignominious death. It was a signal proof of the firmness with which he endured his agonies, as well as of the kindness of his spirit, that while he was hanging on the cross, his mind was directed even to the temporal welfare of his friends: "When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, behold thy mother!"⁷

The moderate enjoyment of temporal blessings, with giving of thanks, Jesus encouraged by his example. When he mingled with the joyful company at Cana, and turned the water into wine, and when he so multiplied the loaves and fishes, that they became the superabundant food of thousands, he displayed a *holy liberality*. Yet he triumphed over bodily indulgence, and willingly submitted to the severest personal privations, for righteousness' sake. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man" had "not where to lay his head."⁸ What could surpass the sublime self-denial of his answer, when, after he had been fasting forty days and forty nights, the devil tempted him to convert the

⁷ John xix, 26.⁸ Matt. viii, 20.

stones into bread? "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."⁹

He was absolutely free from worldliness and ambition; refused all the honours and kingdoms which "the prince of this world" could offer him,¹ and chose a life of deep poverty. His whole career was marked by a perfect *disinterestedness*. But we must follow him to Gethsemane, and mark his agony and bloody sweat; we must behold him crowned with thorns, mocked by his enemies, and bowing under the weight of his cross; we must go with him to Mount Calvary, and reflect on the anguish and dark horrors of his death, when the sins of all mankind were resting upon him; and with these depths of humiliation and suffering, we must compare his former elevation,—the unspeakable happiness and glory from which he abstained. Thus, and thus alone, can we form any adequate notion of his *self-renunciation*.

This self-renunciation was prompted by pure *benevolence*, a quality which abounded in the character of our Saviour. His soul was filled with tenderness, and overflowed with love. He wept over the woes of Jerusalem, and over the grave of Lazarus. His miracles were for the most part works of merey and compassion as well as of power. His benevolence was indeed productive of unceasing *beneficence*. "He went about doing good,"²—preaching the gospel to the poor, feeding the hungry, giving sight to the blind,

⁹ Matt. iv, 2—4.

¹ Matt. iv, 9, 10; *comp.* John xiv, 30.

² Acts x, 38.

hearing to the deaf, strength to the withered, health to the sick, and life to the very dead. Nor was his love restricted to his friends ; it flowed freely towards his enemies. In the midst of the bitterness of death, he prayed for his persecutors, saying, " Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."³

His tenderness towards children was a remarkable trait in his character. He would suffer no man to drive them away from him, but took them up in his arms and blessed them. He said, " Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."⁴

The righteous indignation which Jesus displayed in the reproof of vicious men, may be profitably compared with his *meekness* and *quietness in suffering*. " When he was reviled, he reviled not again ; when he suffered, he threatened not."⁵ He bore the contradiction of sinners and the taunts of his opposers, with immovable patience. He appears to have possessed an absolute command over all his feelings. His temper was like the dove's—incapable of being ruffled.

Another instructive contrast may be drawn between the *dignity* and *lowliness* of Jesus. He never forgot that just self-respect which leads to the inviolate maintenance of the rightful post of duty. Wherever he went, he carried about with him the dignity of a perfect virtue, and to this were often added the mysterious influence and authority of a divine power.⁶

³ Luke xxiii, 34.

⁴ Matt. xix, 14.

⁵ 1 Pet. ii, 23.

⁶ See Matt. viii, 26 ; xiv, 25—32 ; xxi, 12 ; Luke v, 8 ; John xviii, 6.

Yet he was “lowly in heart;”⁷ he came not “to be ministered unto, but to minister.”⁸ He “took upon him the form of a servant.”⁹ He was obedient, during his youth to his earthly parents.¹ He paid tribute to Cæsar, as a faithful subject. He performed for his disciples the lowest offices of kindness and courtesy.²

Christianity teaches us that *the love of God* is the foundation of all moral excellence; and Jesus exemplified this doctrine in his whole life, which was one of unexampled, uninterrupted, *godliness*. He delighted in communion with his heavenly Father, and spent whole nights in prayer.³ Nor was it for himself alone that he communed with his God. His soul overflowed with intercession on behalf of his believing followers.⁴

Finally, he was in all things conformed to the will of his Father. In obedience to that will he came down from heaven; in obedience to it he lived and died upon earth. His works were the Father’s works, and his words the Father’s words.⁵ “My meat,” he said, “is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.”⁶ Nor was it in doing only, but also in suffering, that he was devoted without a murmur to the will of God. “O my Father,” he cried, “if it be possible let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt,”⁷—“not my will, but thine be done.”⁸

⁷ Matt xi, 29.⁸ Matt. xx, 28.⁹ Phil. ii, 7.¹ Luke ii, 51.² John xiii, 5.³ Luke vi, 12.⁴ John xvii.⁵ John x, 37; xvii, 8.⁶ John iv, 34.⁷ Matt. xxvi, 39.⁸ Luke xxii, 42.

Such was the moral character of the Saviour of men; a most astonishing combination of purity, integrity, faithfulness, courage, zeal, fortitude, prudence, liberality, temperance, disinterestedness, heavenly-mindedness, meekness, humility, patience, and charity, all founded on an immeasurable love towards God the Father, and on a perfect obedience to his will.

Here it ought to be remarked, that as the followers of Jesus, in their pursuit of moral excellence, are taught to place their dependence on the influence of the Spirit of God, so Christ, their holy Head, was endued with the same influence, but *without measure*.⁹ He was the “anointed one” of the Father. He produced, in unspeakable ripeness and abundance, that “fruit of the Spirit” which is “in all goodness and righteousness and truth,”¹ and which, in a smaller measure, is borne by all those who love, serve, and follow him.

In applying the foregoing statement to the argument now before us, we have, in the first place, to remark, that the gospels contain, in themselves, a sufficient evidence that the character of Jesus Christ, as developed by the evangelists, is true—that it was taken from the life. Although for the sake of clearness we have stated its several particulars in a regular series, these authors have adopted no such method. A panegyric of their divine Master, however just and merited, and a formal declaration of his virtues, however incontrovertible, formed no part of their plan.

⁹ John iii, 34.

¹ Eph. v, 9.

They were engaged in the duty of faithful narration, and the character of their Lord comes out and is made apparent as it were by accident, in the history of those various events, by which it was tried, and in the course of which it was unfolded.

The simplicity and native charm of the narrative, are such as no fiction can imitate. And let it be remembered, that the history of the life and death of Jesus is recorded by *four* writers, each of whom (while they state *many* things in common) contributes, to the general account of him, a variety of particulars to which the others have not adverted. The faultless and perfectly original character of Jesus stands out to view, as the glorious result of their combined descriptions.

That the delineation of such a person should be sustained, even by a single writer, without any lapse, and should produce a portrait without any blemish, would be extremely improbable, were the tale fictitious. But that so many distinct and evidently independent writers, should have described the conduct and deportment of Jesus, under so great a variety of circumstances, and still no inconsistency be found in the narrative, no flaw in the character—is a fact for which nothing can possibly account, but the truth of the whole statement.

Since then our Saviour's character, as portrayed in the New Testament, was real, we may receive it as a sure evidence, that the religion which he taught is *divine*. For, in the first place, we are bound by the laws of testimony, by plain reason, and by common sense, to receive, as *true*, whatsoever was affirmed by

a man of *perfect* morality. And secondly, the character of Jesus, considered as an essential part of a religious system, is in itself a strong internal proof that God—the fountain of all virtue and loveliness—is the Author of Christianity. In vain should we search for the description of such a character in the pages either of profane history, or of uninspired philosophy. It stands unrivalled and alone, a master-piece of divine wisdom and power, stamped with the image of the most high God.

Between the requirements of the law, and the example of the lawgiver there is no shadow of disagreement. Let the inquirer after truth reflect on this coincidence; let him examine the nice and easy fitting in of the law with the pattern, and of the pattern with the law, and he will be constrained to confess that both originate with that God of harmony, whose works alone tally with a perfect precision.

SECTION VI.

ON THE GENERAL ACCOUNT OF THE SAVIOUR.

WHEN conversing with the Jews respecting his own attributes, Jesus Christ appealed to the Scriptures as witnesses to the truths which he uttered—"They are they which testify of me."¹ So also the apostle Paul asserts that the "holy Scriptures" are able to make "wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus."² Our Lord and his apostle here referred to the Scriptures of the Old Testament: but their doctrine is applicable with still greater force to those of the New Testament. The sacred writers of both dispensations unite in testifying of Christ; and on the other hand, the description which they give of him reflects its glory on the Scriptures, and bears witness to the inspiration under which they were composed.

In order to do justice to our present argument, therefore, we must by no means confine ourselves to our Lord's human life and moral character; we must endeavour to take a comprehensive view of his nature, history, and offices, as the *Son of God*, and the *Saviour of the world*.

¹ John v, 39.

² 2 Tim. iii, 15.

When Jesus Christ came into the world, he proceeded forth from God the Father, and came down from heaven.³ He was therefore with the Father and in heaven, before his birth. He existed before John the Baptist;⁴ and before Abraham himself.⁵ He was the Lord of David,⁶ and the living Redeemer of Job.⁷ He was with God in glory before the foundation of the world⁸—the “Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last;”⁹ his “goings forth have been from of old from everlasting.”¹

He is the Son of God, “the only-begotten of the Father,”² begotten before any thing was created.³ He is the power and wisdom of God⁴—the Word by whom God acts, and in whom he is made manifest to his creatures. He is the “image of the invisible God,”⁵ “the express image of his person (or substance.)”⁶

He was “in the form of God,” and “thought it not robbery to be equal with God”⁷—one with the Father,⁸ and therefore himself God. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”⁹

“All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.”¹ “The world was made by him.”² God made the worlds by his Son.³ By the Son “were all things created that

³ John iii, 13; xvi, 28.

⁴ John i, 15.

⁵ John viii, 56—58.

⁶ Ps. cx, 1.

⁷ Job xix, 23—26.

⁸ John xvii, 5, 24.

⁹ Rev. xxii, 13.

¹ Mic. v, 2.

² John v, 14.

³ Col. i, 15.

πρωτοτόκος πάσης κτίσεως.

⁴ 1 Cor. i, 24.

⁵ Col. i, 15.

⁶ Heb. i, 3.

⁷ Phil. ii, 6.

⁸ John x, 30.

⁹ John i, 1.

¹ John i, 3.

² John i, 10.

³ Heb. i, 2.

are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all things were created by him and for him.”⁴

By him also “all things consist.”⁵ He upholds all things “by the word of his power;”⁶ and he is himself unchangeable—“the same yesterday, and to-day and for ever.”⁷

He was “that eternal life which was with the Father.”⁸ “In him was life, and the life was the light of men;”⁹ he was “the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”¹ He preached by his Spirit to the world before the flood.² He inspired the prophets who spake concerning himself.³ He was the spiritual rock who miraculously supplied the wants of the Israelites⁴—the leader whom they tempted to their own destruction.⁵ When the law was delivered from Mount Sinai, his “voice shook the earth.”⁶

We have abundant reasons for identifying him with the “Angel of the covenant,” who conversed with Abraham,⁷ received the vows of Jacob,⁸ and “redeemed” him “from all evil;”⁹ revealed himself to Moses in the burning bush;¹ led the Israelites through the desert, in a cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night;² appeared to Joshua, in the character of the

⁴ Col. i, 16.⁵ Verse 17.⁶ Heb. i, 3.⁷ Heb. xiii, 8.⁸ 1 John i, 2.⁹ John i, 4.¹ John i, 9.² 1 Pet. iii, 19.³ 1 Pet. i, 11.⁴ 1 Cor. x, 4.⁵ Verse 9.⁶ Heb. xii, 26.⁷ Gen. xviii, 1.⁸ Gen. xxxi, 11—13.⁹ Gen. xlvi, 16.¹ Exod. iii, 2.² Exod. xiv, 19; *comp.* xiii, 21.

captain of the Lord's host ;³ drove out the Canaanites from the land of promise ;⁴ and was manifested in his divine character and glory to Isaiah,⁵ Ezekiel,⁶ Daniel,⁷ Amos,⁸ and Zechariah.⁹ He was the ever present helper and governor of God's people, the object of their fear, their love, and their allegiance. In him was the name of his Father ; he was arrayed in the attributes of God.¹ He acted and spake on behalf of Jehovah, and *was* Jehovah.²

In the fulness of time—at the precise date ; in the very place ; of the nation, tribe, and family, predicted by the prophets,—the “Word was made flesh”³—made of a woman, made under the law.”⁴ “As the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same.”⁵ He was clothed with a human body⁶ and a human soul,⁷ and, having before been God only, he now became God and man.⁸ “God was manifest in the flesh.”⁹

He was conceived of the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary,¹ and his name was called “Emmanuel, God with us.”² Then did the shepherds hear the angel saying, “Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people, for unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”³

Before Jesus commenced his ministry, came John

³ Josh. v, 13.

⁴ Exod. xxiii, 23.

⁵ Isa. vi, 1.

⁶ Ezek. i, 28.

⁷ Dan. x, 6.

⁸ Amos vii, 6—8.

⁹ Zech. i, 1—13.

¹ Exod. xxiii, 21.

² Gen. xix, 24.

³ John i, 14.

⁴ Gal. iv, 4.

⁵ Heb. ii, 14.

⁶ Heb. x, 10.

⁷ Matt. xxvi, 38.

⁸ Heb. ii, 14—18.

⁹ 1 Tim. iii, 16.

¹ Luke i, 35.

² Matt. i, 23.

³ Luke ii, 11.

the Baptist, than whom there had arisen "no greater prophet,"⁴ to usher in the coming of "the Highest,"⁵ to prepare "the way of the LORD."⁶ He pointed out Jesus to the people, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."⁷

After receiving the Holy Ghost, and after being confessed of the Father as his "beloved Son,"⁸ Jesus commenced his ministry, which burst forth with matchless power and brightness. He promulgated the purest code of morality ever listened to by the ear of man ;⁹ he "brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel."¹ He developed the moral government of God, and the responsibility of man, and unveiled the awful secrets of eternity.² On more private occasions he declared those mysterious doctrines of atonement and regeneration,³ which were afterwards to be proclaimed by his inspired apostles, to the whole world.

The ministry of Jesus was accompanied by wonderful works, wrought by the power of the Spirit of God, and by his own power. These miracles were, for the most part, public in their performance, sudden in their operation, and marvellously great in their effects.

While our Lord was on earth, abundant evidence was afforded both of his humanity and of his deity. On the one hand, he lay a helpless infant in the manger ; increased in wisdom and stature as he advanced in years ; performed the laborious functions of a minister ; was tempted by Satan : thought, wept,

⁴ Matt. xi, 11.⁵ Luke i, 76.⁶ Luke iii, iv.⁷ John i, 29.⁸ Matt. iii, 13—17.⁹ Matt. v, vi, vii.¹ 2 Tim. i, 10.² Matt. xiii, xxv.³ John iii.

spake, and prayed, like ourselves; was afflicted, insulted, tormented, and finally expired on the cross, and was consigned to the grave a corpse. On the other hand, he searched the hearts, and knew the secret thoughts of his hearers; reversed the order of nature; controuled the stormy elements; raised the dead to life; asserted his equality and union with the Father;⁴ and accepted those honours which were due to God alone. When Thomas “answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God,” Jesus approved his confession of faith, and said, “Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed.”⁵

The great purpose for which the Son of God took our nature upon him was the redemption of mankind; and this purpose could be effected, according to the eternal counsels of the Father, only through his *atoning death*. “The Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many.”⁶ He became incarnate, “that *through death* he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil.”⁷ “Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.”⁸ “Through the eternal Spirit,” (he) “offered himself without spot to God.”⁹ “Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.”¹

This cardinal doctrine of Christianity is foreshown by the types of the law, declared by the prophets, stated in plain terms by Jesus himself, and fully un-

⁴ John v, 19—23; x, 30.

⁵ John xx, 29.

⁶ Matt. xx, 28.

⁷ Heb. ii, 4.

⁸ 1 Pet. iii, 18.

⁹ Heb. ix, 14.

¹ Heb. ix, 26.

folded by the apostles. Nor was it for one part of mankind in preference to another, that Jesus died. "He tasted death for every man."² He came to save "the world."³ He was "the propitiation" (or atonement) for the sins of the "whole world."⁴

The death of Jesus, like his birth, was attended by circumstances which indicated his divine dignity. Through the space of three noon-day hours a miraculous darkness covered the whole land; and when he "yielded up the ghost," the veil of the temple was rent in twain, the earth quaked, and many bodies of the saints who slept arose.⁵ And here it ought to be remarked, that as the humanity of Jesus was the sole medium through which he made atonement for sin (for he died only as man); so it was his divinity—his Sonship—his perfect oneness with the Father—which alone imparted to his death its mighty efficacy for the salvation of sinners.⁶

On the same principle, it was through the medium of his humanity, that Jesus fulfilled the whole law of God, and bequeathed to his disciples in every age a perfect pattern for the regulation of their conduct. Yet surely it is because of his infinite worth and dignity in the glorious Godhead, that Christ becomes "*our* righteousness,"⁷ and that his righteousness, imputed to believers, procures for them the reward of a happy immortality.

"It was not possible" that Jesus "should be holden of death."⁸ His body saw no corruption.⁹ On the

² Heb. ii, 9.

³ John iii, 16, 17.

⁴ 1 John ii, 2.

⁵ Matt. xxvii, 45—52.

⁶ 2 Cor. v, 19; 1 John, v, 11.

⁷ Jer. xxiii, 6.

⁸ Acts ii, 24.

⁹ Ps. xvi, 10.

morning of the third day, by his own power,¹ and by the power of the Father,² he arose from the dead, and was seen first by the women, next by Simon Peter, then by all the apostles, and afterwards by “five hundred brethren at once.”³ These all bear witness to the glorious fact of his resurrection, by which fact were for ever established the reality of his mission, the efficacy of his sacrifice, and the completeness of his victory over Satan. God hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”⁴

After conversing occasionally with his disciples during forty days, he met them on Mount Bethany, and there was taken up from them, and “a cloud received him out of their sight.”⁵ He ascended into heaven and “sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.”⁶ God “set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.”⁷

Jesus Christ, in his exaltation is both king and priest. As king, he reigns supreme over the universal church, militant on earth and glorified in heaven, and he rules over the universe for the church’s sake.⁸ As priest, he reconciles us to his Father through his blood, ministers to all our spiritual need, rebukes our adversary, pleads our cause,⁹ and ever lives to make intercession for us.¹

¹ John x, 18. ² Acts ii, 32. ³ 1 Cor. xv, 6.

⁴ 1 Pet. i, 3. ⁵ Acts i, 9. ⁶ Heb. i, 3. ⁷ Eph. i, 20, 21.

⁸ Eph. i, 22. ⁹ 1 John ii, 1. ¹ Heb. vii, 25.

He is the Mediator between God and man, in whom "all fulness" dwells,² and who still unites in himself the human and the divine natures. In virtue of the former, he is "the first-born from the dead,"³ whose resurrection is the pledge of ours; and, having been tempted in all points like as we are, (though "without sin,") he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities.⁴ In virtue of the latter, he bestows upon his church all spiritual gifts and graces, and, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, is the object of religious adoration to the whole rational creation.⁵

Finally, at the hour appointed in the hidden counsels of the Father,⁶ he will come again with great glory to judge the quick and the dead.⁷ Then shall we hail his *manhood* as essential to his *sympathy*, and admire the equity of God who has "committed all judgment" unto Jesus, "*because he is the Son of man.*"⁸ Then also will he gloriously display his godhead, by raising the countless multitudes of the dead;⁹ by folding up the earth and heavens as a garment;¹ by detecting the secrets of all hearts;² and by rendering to every man according to his deeds.

At that momentous period, according to the Scriptures, the whole economy of redemption will be completed, and the Son will resign his mediatorial authority to the Father from whom he received it.³ Yet will he never lose the distinctive character of the

² Col. i, 19.³ Col. i, 18.⁴ Heb. iv, 15.⁵ Phil. ii, 10, 11; Heb. i, 6; Rev. v, 12, 13.⁶ Matt. xxiv, 36.⁷ Matt. xxv, 31.⁸ John v, 22, 27.⁹ 1 Cor. xv, 52; Phil. iii, 21.¹ Heb. i, 12.² Rev. ii, 23.³ 1 Cor. xv, 28.

Lamb immaculate,⁴ and with the Father and the Holy Ghost, he will reign “over all” everlastingly,—“God blessed for ever.”⁵

Such is the general account given to us in the Bible of the nature, history, and offices of the Saviour of mankind. The passages here cited are both numerous and clear; and to these might easily be added a multitude of others which bear a corresponding and confirming testimony to the same truths.

In adducing this account as an internal evidence of the inspiration of its authors, we may, in the first place, notice its *originality*. Nothing can be more novel and extraordinary—nothing more unlike the inventions of man—than the various parts of which it is composed; and, taken as a whole, this delineation of the Deliverer of our fallen race is absolutely singular and unrivalled. Plato indeed entertained some wandering notions respecting “word” or “reason” as forming part of the Deity; but who for a moment would compare these notions with the luminous description given in Scripture of the Word of God, who is the brightness of God’s glory, one with Jehovah, bearing his name, participating in his attributes, and therefore truly God?

Again, we are aware that gross superstitions respecting incarnate deities distinguish the idolatry of the Hindoos and some other heathen nations; and these superstitions may possibly be the hideous and distorted imitations of truth. But where shall we hear of any thing comparable to the union described in Scripture, of perfect humanity and perfect deity, in our Lord

⁴ Rev. xxi, 23; xxii, 1, 3.

⁵ Rom. ix, 5.

Jesus Christ—a union which although incomprehensible in its *mode*, is intelligible in its *use*—essential to all the offices of the Redeemer, and sustained with the even hand of omnipotence, through every stage of God's mighty scheme for the salvation of sinners?

Secondly, let us observe the *completeness* and *harmony* of this account of the Saviour. A multitude of distinct testimonies, given forth in different ages, relating to various points of the subject, and contributed, without any systematic arrangement, by a host of independent writers, are found to coincide with exact precision. Without difficulty they fall into admirable order, and produce a *whole* which men and angels shall never cease to contemplate with wonder, gratitude, and delight. The book which tells us of these things, and so tells us of them, must needs be the book of God.

SECTION VII.

ON THE FATHER, THE SON, AND THE SPIRIT—ONE GOD.

WE have already dwelt on the attributes of God the Father, and on those of his only-begotten Son, who is one with him. But the Scriptures make known to us a third divine Agent—the Holy Spirit of truth and righteousness—who illuminates, converts, and purifies the souls of men.

When our Saviour was about to quit this lower world, he commanded his disciples to go and teach all nations, “baptising them into the name¹ of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”² From which expressions we learn that these servants of God were to baptize their converts into that faith, of which the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are the inseparable objects. Now since it cannot for a moment be imagined that a mere attribute or influence could be presented to us, as a joint object of our faith with the Father and the Son, this passage must be regarded as containing a clear evidence of the personality of the Spirit.

The same doctrine appears to have been adverted

¹ εἰς τὸ ὄνομα.

² Matt. xxvii, 19.

to by our Saviour, when he spoke of the Holy Ghost as of one against whom it is unpardonable to blaspheme.³ Again our Lord repeatedly describes him as the Comforter or *Paraclete*⁴ of his people. "When the Comforter is come, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things."⁵ "It is expedient for you that I go away: for, if I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you; but, if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment."⁶ In all these passages the Spirit is described under a personal title, and as exercising personal attributes. On the same principle, we find that it was the Holy Ghost to whom Ananias and Sapphira *lied*, and whom they conspired to *tempt*.⁷ He it is who said, "Separate *me* Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them;"⁸ who *forbad* Paul to preach the word in Asia;⁹ to whom it *seemed good* not to burthen the Gentiles with Jewish ceremonies;¹ who *divides* to *every man* spiritual gifts according to his *will*;² whom we are commanded not to *grieve*;³ and to whom our bodies are to be consecrated as a living *temple*.⁴

While the Holy Ghost is thus represented to us in Scripture under a personal character, the attributes ascribed to him are plainly those of the Deity him-

³ Matt. xii, 31, 32.

⁴ *παράκλητος* means an advocate, defender, helper, and teacher, as well as comforter.

⁵ John xiv, 26.

⁶ John xvi, 7, 8.

⁷ Acts v, 3, 9.

⁸ Acts xiii, 2.

⁹ Acts xvi, 6.

¹ Acts xv, 28.

² 1 Cor. xii, 8—11.

³ Eph. iv, 30.

⁴ 1 Cor. vi, 19.

self. God is a Spirit. Invisible and spiritual in his nature, he fills his own works ; he exercises over them an unseen and powerful influence ; he dwells and operates in the hearts of men. Nor can we deny the truth of the converse of such a proposition. The Spirit who fills the works of the Almighty, who exercises over them an unseen, yet powerful influence, who dwells and operates in the hearts of men, is GOD. "the LORD is that SPIRIT."⁵

The union of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit in the work of *Creation*, is conspicuously marked in the book of Genesis as compared with the declarations of the New Testament. When God the Father spake and it was done,—when he said, "Let there be light," and there was light—he created by his *Word*. And at the same time, "the *Spirit* of God moved on the face of the waters."⁶ It was therefore in his true and appropriate character that Jehovah spake when he said, "Let us make man in OUR image, after OUR likeness."⁷ The same union in the work of *Redemption*, was memorably displayed, when the Spirit descended like a dove, and lighted on the head of Jesus ; while the voice of the Father was heard, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.⁸ "The grace of the LORD JESUS CHRIST," said Paul, "and the love of GOD, and the communion of the HOLY GHOST, be with you all, amen."⁹

There is no passage, however, which throws more light on this subject than the following : "Howbeit,"

⁵ 2 Cor. iii, 17.

⁶ Gen. i, 2.

⁷ Gen. i, 26 ; *comp.* Gen iii, 22.

⁸ Matt. iii, 15—17.

⁹ 2 Cor. xiii, 14 ; *comp.* Eph. iv, 4—6 ; 1 Cor. xii, 4—6.

said Jesus, "when he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore, said I, that he shall take of mine, and shew it unto you."¹ Here the Spirit is spoken of as the guide and teacher of the Lord's people, who applies to their understandings and hearts the doctrine of Christ—administers to them of his love and grace—and thus glorifies the Son, by whom he is commissioned. On the other hand, the mercies of the Son are identified with those of the Father, to whom he is himself subordinate, and from the boundless depths of whose compassion, springs the whole mighty system ordained for man's salvation.

Behold then the goodly order of truth. The Son is *of* the Father—the only-begotten of God. The Holy Spirit is the Father's² and the Son's.³ The Father *sends* the Son. The Father and the Son *send* the Holy Spirit.⁴ Nor can it be denied that, in the economy of grace and salvation, they have severally distinct offices which the sacred writers never confuse. The Father originates and elects. The Son mediates and atones. The Holy Spirit regenerates and sanctifies.

While however the Scriptures afford us abundant evidence that the Father is God, that the Son is God, and that the Holy Spirit is God, and plainly indicate

¹ John xvi, 14, 15.

² Matt. iii, 16.

³ Rom. viii, 9.

⁴ John xiv, 26; xv, 26.

their order and their respective offices, there is nothing in the sacred volume which in the least degree supports the notion that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, are separate Deities. So blasphemous and absurd an opinion has probably never been entertained, even for a moment, by any serious reader of the Bible; for it is abhorrent from the whole scope and meaning of the book. The sacred writers ascribe to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit respectively, the names and attributes of the *only true God*—the immutable Jehovah: and at the same time the doctrine, that “there is no other God but he,” is not only clearly declared, but is presumed and understood in every page, and almost in every verse, of the sacred volume.

What then is the conclusion to which a comprehensive view of Scriptural truth inevitably leads? It is that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, are essentially and eternally ONE.

The distinction to which the Scriptures bear testimony as subsisting in the Deity, is so far from undermining the doctrine of his oneness, that it imparts to that doctrine a fresh energy and a peculiar glory. Certain it is, that where the unity of God is admitted, and this distinction is nevertheless denied, as among the Mahometans and modern Jews, religion loses much of its practical influence and vital power. Yet while the Christian rejoices in the distinct characters and offices of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, so graciously revealed to us for our instruction and edification, he probably never finds his soul bowed down with so deep a reverence or filled with so pure a de-

light, as when he contemplates the Almighty, as an ineffable glory—an incommunicable name—an infinite and incomprehensible UNITY.

We must now apply these remarks to the argument before us. Were that union and distinction in the divine nature, which is so plainly declared in Scripture, contrary to reason—that is, *naturally impossible*—we should be driven to the conclusion, that the Bible is so far from being the book of God, that it can be ascribed only to ignorant and erring man. But God is an infinite and unsearchable Being, and the least degree of reflection may suffice to satisfy us that there is nothing which reason can disprove in the doctrine of Scripture, that in a certain respect he is THREE, and in another respect, ONE.

Yet that doctrine is *beyond* reason—far out of the reach of our intellectual powers; and this is the very ground on which we hail it as another internal evidence of the divine origin of the Holy Scripture. While it bears upon us with a native strength and harmony which plainly indicate its truth, and while, when rightly understood, it is found to be full of unutterable blessings for our fallen race, it relates to the unfathomable secrets of the divine nature, and could not possibly have been discovered by the unassisted discernment of man. To whom then can we ascribe the revelation of this doctrine, but to the Supreme Being himself?

It is not, however, to the fact of its revelation only, but also to the manner in which it is revealed, that we may safely make our appeal. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit are presented to us in the

Scriptures as severally God, and as the distinct objects of our faith ; and at the same time we are perpetually reminded by the sacred writers that God is ONE. Yet these writers offer no apology whatsoever for this apparent diversity of statement ; nor do they make the slightest attempt to explain the mode in which these truths consist. The most mysterious of all doctrines is revealed in their writings with a perfect simplicity ; and on the apparent presumption, that no doubts could be entertained, and no casuistry exercised, on the subject.

How different would have been the case, had the Scriptures been written by some of those theological speculators, who have since handled the same subject, in their own wisdom and strength. What scholastic refinements, what apologies for apparent difficulties, what nice distinctions, what extraordinary terms, would have been imposed on their readers !

In the Bible all is simple, powerful, and practical. While enough is hidden to humble us under a sense of our own ignorance, enough is revealed to direct our faith and to regulate our conduct ; and the very mode in which the light shines upon us, affords a substantial evidence that it is the light of heaven.

Thus various and satisfactory are the evidences which the Bible, *considered alone*, contains of its divine authority. Of the particular points which have now

been offered to the attention of the reader, and which, after all, are only a selection of evidences, each may fairly be deemed conclusive independently of the others.

Let the inquirer after truth reflect on the general excellence of Scripture; on the moral and spiritual energy which pervades the book; on the concentrated wisdom of a multitude of its particular texts, on the vigour and usefulness of its larger parts, and on the harmony of the mighty whole; more especially, let him compare the types of the Old Testament with the great Antitype of the gospel; and let him observe the figurative application even of real characters and historical facts recorded in Scripture—all teeming with lessons of Christian doctrine and spiritual religion.

Or let him direct his attention to the agreement between many of the prophecies of Scripture, and the history contained in the same book, and particularly between the predictions respecting Christ, and the narratives of the four evangelists; and let him observe that while the prophecy and the history are precisely matched, the prophecy could not possibly have occasioned the history, or the history the prophecy.

Or let him examine the revelation made in Scripture, of the natural and moral attributes of God our Father; his spirituality, eternity, omnipotence, wisdom, omniscience, and omnipresence; his holiness, justice, equity, long-suffering, goodness, and love—a revelation which throws into the shade all the specu-

lations of philosophers respecting the nature of the Deity, and which irresistibly recommends itself, as of divine origin, to every candid and serious mind.

Or let him compare the attributes of God with his moral law as it is unfolded in the Bible ; let him dwell on the harmony which subsists between them ; let him mark the perfection of that law, and the peculiarity of some of its features ; and especially let him observe the standard which it proclaims, and the motives which it calls into action.

Or let him observe the exact correspondence of the moral law in its full development, with the example of our Lord Jesus Christ ; let him examine the proofs afforded by the gospels themselves that this example was real ; and then let him meditate on the strength and beauty of its several parts, and on the originality and divine excellence of the whole.

Or let him contemplate the Saviour of mankind in that more extensive view which comprehends his whole nature, character, and history—his eternal pre-existence, his creative power, his incarnation, his miracles, his atoning death, his resurrection, his ascension, his reign of glory, and his predicted return on the day of judgment. More especially let him reflect on that wondrous combination in Christ of deity and humanity, which qualifies him for all his gracious offices, as a Mediator, a Priest, a King, a Judge, and a Redeemer.

Or, lastly, let him dwell on the personal attributes and gracious operations of the Holy Ghost, the Sanctifier ; on the distinct character and offices of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, in the economy of

grace and salvation; on their harmony of design and operation both in creation and in redemption; and above all, on their absolute, and unchangeable oneness in the glorious godhead.

To whichever of these points in our argument, we direct our attention, we can scarcely fail to find in it (if our search be deliberate and sincere) something which will constrain the inference, that the Holy Scriptures were given by inspiration of God.

But the evidences of Christianity in general, and this branch of them in particular, are cumulative. While each article in the series of proofs has its own force, it adds to the cogency of all the others. This fact depends on a general principle, of the truth of which a slight degree of reflection will be sufficient to convince us. If a certain proposition is clearly supported by a single testimony, the proof is so far satisfactory; but, when a second testimony is produced, we have not only the insulated force of each, but the correspondence between the two affords a distinct additional evidence that we are deceived by neither. Again, when a third testimony is added, the same effect is produced in a still greater degree, and behold we have "a threefold cord not quickly broken!" The comparison is a just one; three threads have severally their own force, but, when twisted together, they produce a cord, of which the strength is far superior to the mere sum of their original forces.

But, in an argument like the present, where the series of proofs consists of *numerous* distinct particulars, every one of which possesses an inherent validity, the accumulated force of the whole becomes irresist-

ible. Although parts of the system of Christianity may still be left in obscurity, and lie beyond the reach of human explanation, this is a force of evidence which bears down every obstruction, and ought to dissipate every doubt. Nothing remains for us as reasonable men, but to admit the conclusion, that the religion of the Bible is the TRUTH of GOD.

PART II.

THE BIBLE COMPARED WITH EXPERIENCE.

THE word *experience* must here be understood in a wide and general sense; as comprehending the results not merely of self-knowledge but of that acquaintance with mankind, and with the order and constitution of nature, which we obtain from our own observation. In discussing the present subject, we shall make use, as occasion requires, of the following lines of reasoning, all of which depend on that primary truth, that there is one God, the Author of nature, and the Supreme Ruler of created things.

First—When the doctrines revealed to us in the Scriptures are analogous to the ordinary course of nature and Providence—similar in effect and identical in principle—this circumstance affords a satisfactory answer to all objections which can be urged against them; because experience proves that the effects or principles objected to, (though the reasons for them may be hidden from us,) belong to God's *known* plan for the government of the world. But such a mode of reasoning not only enables us to parry objections; it supplies us with positive evidence of no inconsider-

able importance, that the doctrines in question are true. Since God is one, and his universe an harmonious system, the fact that these doctrines are of the like kind and character with those things which are actually perceptible in his government, affords a strong presumption that the God of nature has ordained them—that they originate with him alone. The more exact the analogy, and the more marked and peculiar the points of resemblance, the more conclusive this evidence becomes.

Secondly—When the declarations of the Bible, respecting the character and condition of mankind, or any other points of a practical nature, are found to correspond with undoubted facts—when they fall in precisely with that which we feel in ourselves and observe in others—we, of course, draw the inference that the Scriptures are true. And when the truths which they thus communicate to us, although confirmed by experience, are such as man cannot discover in his own wisdom, and such as are utterly opposed to all his favourite systems—we further conclude that this unflattering intelligence is sent to us from that Being, who searches our hearts and knows all things as they are.

Thirdly—When we take a view of our weakness and sinfulness by nature, and contemplate Christianity as a scheme ordained for our recovery ; and when we ascertain from experience that this scheme is precisely suitable to its purpose, and supplies our *whole* spiritual need, we are furnished with unquestionable proof that it is the work of a *wise* and *merciful* Contriver. And further, when we consider the nature of

this scheme—its complexity and unity, its wondrous originality, its universal applicability—we rest assured that its Contriver is GOD.

In the following pages, these lines of reasoning are not always separately pursued ; but the reader will have no difficulty in perceiving to which of them each successive argument properly belongs ; and I trust it will be found, that they are susceptible of being blended without confusion.

SECTION I.

ON A FUTURE LIFE.

THE declarations of Scripture respecting a future life admit, in one point of view, of no comparison with experience, because no man living has yet experienced that there is such a life; and, supposing that there is one, no man can compare that new state of existence with the account given of it in the Bible, who has not himself passed through the portals of the grave.

In another point of view, however, the doctrine of revealed religion, that man lives after death, may justly be said to accord with experience, because things which we see, and feel, and know, in this present world, lead to the conclusion that this doctrine is true. That such is the fact will appear from a brief consideration of the following particulars.

I. Every man, capable of reflection, is perfectly aware that he possesses not only a gross material body, but a mind which perceives, thinks, wills, and reasons; and, although these two are brought into a close union, and in various respects powerfully affect each other, he is also aware that they are distinguished by quite different capacities and functions. The body, like all other *matter*, is tangible, extended, and divi-

sible ; and, being organized with a perfect skill, it becomes a well-adapted machine for all the purposes of life. On the other hand, the mind, intangible and spiritual, sits at the helm as its supreme governor, and directs all its movements. It sees through the eye, hears through the ear, and handles through the touch. Closely, however, as it is connected with the body in the exercise of all these functions, it is allied with foreign matter, in a precisely similar manner, though in a different degree. A man sees with his eye as he sees with a telescope ; both are mere instruments of vision.

But it is in the higher operations of the mind, that the distinctness of its character and functions from those of the body become most conspicuous. The faculties of reflection and abstract reasoning, and above all, the faculty of worship, must for ever distinguish the mind of man from the instinct of the inferior animals ; and still more obviously from all things merely material. These are functions which a man performs without any aid from his natural senses, and often when, during the hour of silent meditation, the world within him is separated from all external objects. The mind can then roam over the universe at its pleasure ; and, when it rises in living aspirations towards the Maker and Ruler of that universe, it holds converse with God himself.

All inquiries into the nature and essence of mind—what it is, or of what it consists—are improper and absurd : because the question lies beyond our reach. It is not within the province of our faculties. Mind and matter are severally known only by their proper-

ties. By matter we mean, that which is tangible, extended, and divisible; by mind, that which perceives, reflects, wills, and reasons. These properties are wholly dissimilar, and admit of no comparison. To pretend that mind is matter, is to propose a contradiction in terms, and is just as absurd as to pretend that matter is mind. Since, therefore, the thinking part within us is plainly distinct in its nature and character from the gross body with which it is here connected, it is only reasonable to believe, that they are essentially independent, and that, when the body perishes, or rather falls to pieces, (for in the course of nature, no particle of matter is ever destroyed,) the mind will survive the wreck.

II. This presumption is greatly strengthened by facts familiar to every observer, and often brought home to the experience of individuals. A man may lose many parts of his body—the eye by which he sees, the tongue by which he tastes, the ear by which he hears, and the hand by which he handles—he may be deprived of all his organs of sense, and yet is the same man as he was before. The mind which *is* the man, continues unchanged and unimpaired. Chemistry, indeed, demonstrates that our bodies are in a state of perpetual flux, and that not a particle of the matter which once belonged to us, can now be called our own; yet we never lose our personal identity. We are still the same rational and responsible individuals as ever.

These remarks apply to the brain, which is the receptacle of sensation—the connecting link between the senses and the mind—as well as to other parts of

our mortal frame. It is a well known fact, that this organ is sometimes seriously injured, and a large part of it actually removed, without any material interruption of the functions of the mind. Closely connected, therefore, as is this wondrous instrument with these functions, and in general essential to their exercise in our present state of being, it is no more to be confused or identified with the mind itself, than is any other part of the human body. Finally, it often happens, that, when the body is desperately diseased, and within a few moments of death, the mind remains unimpaired, and even shines forth with peculiar strength and brightness; displaying its loftiest powers of reflection, hope, and adoration.

These and similar facts plainly indicate that, as matter exists independently of mind, so mind may exist independently of matter; and they confirm the presumption, derived from the distinctness of their natures, that death cannot annihilate our rational faculty. Since experience proves that "all things continue as they are, except in those respects in which we have some reason to think they will be altered,"¹ it is plain that the doctrine of the soul's surviving the body *agrees with experience*. Who that reflects on the native powers of the living spirit within him can avoid acknowledging the propriety of that distinction on which our Saviour insisted; "Fear not them which kill the body, *but are not able to kill the soul*; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell?"²

¹ Butler's Analogy, chap. i, p. 19.

² Matt. x, 28.

Here we may call to mind a lesson taught us by reason as well as by Scripture, that the Creator of heaven and earth, who pervades the universe which he has made, is himself an immaterial Being. Yet he is the Living One and the fountain of all life; and in him are centered, in infinite perfection, all the properties of a rational mind. When, therefore, he breathed into man a spark of his own intelligence—a soul capable of reflection and reason—we may fairly conclude that he bestowed upon him something which, like himself, exists independently of matter—something which, like himself, can never die.

III. From the premises it may be inferred, that the only respect in which the soul of man is altered by the death of the body is this—that, being freed from its mortal tenement, it is introduced to a higher and purer state of existence—a state of which, at present, we can form no conception. On this point again, the presumptions of reason are in accordance with revelation. “Verily I say unto thee,” said the dying Redeemer to the thief on the cross, “to-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise;” that is, in the region of departed spirits—in a place of exaltation and felicity.³

Now such a change of condition as we have here supposed, is so far from being at variance with the visible order and constitution of the world, that it is precisely analogous to many things which we know to take place in nature; that is, under the perceptible government of God. The seed is sown in the earth, and falls to pieces in the ground; yet in due season

³ Luke xxiii, 42, 43.

it becomes "the full corn in the ear," or the flower laden with blossoms, or even a tree so mighty, that the fowls of the heaven lodge in its branches.⁴ A worm is changed to a chrysalis, and undergoes a sort of living death, until the appointed moment arrives for its breaking every bond, and spreading to the sun the painted wings of the butterfly.

But what change can be imagined more striking and complete than that which even here takes place in man himself? What difference, as to extent and variety of powers, can be conceived more remarkable, than that which subsists between the unborn babe, and man in all the maturity of his bodily and intellectual faculties? If, then, we are to judge from the analogy of nature, we must surely consider it credible and even probable, (independently of other evidence,) that the death of the body is a kind of second birth to the soul; an event which will usher the immortal part of man, with enlarged and still enlarging faculties, into a loftier state of being—into a new and more extended field of thought and action, of suffering or enjoyment.

IV. To these considerations must be added the general consent of mankind, in all ages, to the doctrine of a future life. The impression seems to be

⁴ "All things," says Bishop Pearson (after describing the change of seasons, and the annual revivals of nature,) "are repaired by corrupting, are preserved by perishing, and revived by dying; and can we think that man, the lord of all these things which thus die and revive for him, should be so detained in death as never to live again? Is it imaginable that God should thus restore all things to man, and not restore man to himself?"—*On the Creed*, Art. xi.

almost universal in the minds of men, that, when the body ceases to exist, the indestructible spirit wings its way to unknown regions, either of bliss or woe. This is a belief which the idolatrous Hindoo, the polished Greek, the untutored American Indian, the Jew, the Mussulman, and the Christian, have been found to entertain in common ; and it may be questioned whether the most hardened of infidels ever succeeded in *fully* persuading himself that death would be his annihilation. The impious motto of the French revolutionists, “death is an eternal sleep,” is opposed at once to the fair presumptions of reason, to the analogy of nature, and to a feeling deeply inherent in the mind of man ; inherent, at least, wheresoever his rational faculties are *in any degree* developed.

I consider it to be a matter of fact, confirmed by the experience of millions, that our spiritual part—that part which reasons, reflects, and communes with its Creator—shrinks from the notion that its existence will cease, clings to life, pants after immortality, and, as it were, *refuses to die*.

Now, whether we ascribe the concurrent feelings and opinions of mankind on this subject to original revelation, or to the light of reason, or to a sense of moral responsibility, or to the very constitution of our nature, or to all these causes combined, we cannot reasonably avoid the conclusion, that the foundation on which they rest is *truth*.

Since, then, we are sensible that matter and mind have distinct natures and properties ; since their independence of each other is evinced by many notorious facts ; since we know that many of God’s crea-

tures undergo vast changes, and rise step by step in the scale of being, without losing their identity ; and since the general consent of mankind proclaims the reality of a life to come—we may safely affirm that the doctrine of Scripture, on this momentous subject, agrees with experience. It agrees with those conclusions of reason, which experience fully justifies and even constrains.

While, however, we rejoice in this harmony of evidence, we ought always to remember that the proper and sufficient proof of a future life is to be found in the Bible itself. Since the primary object of the Christian revelation is to declare the reality and unfold the interests of a world to come, all the evidences, whether historical, prophetic, or moral, which prove the truth of Christianity, bear with peculiar force on this essential point. It is the glorious distinction of the divine Founder of our religion that “he has brought life and immortality to light by the gospel.” It ought also to be observed, that, while revealed religion agrees with the dictates of reason and nature respecting a future life, and, as it were, adopts them for companions *as far as they go*, it contains a further development of truth in reference to this subject, and, on its own authority, declares some essential particulars, which our natural faculties could never enable us to discover.

Although, in the first place, observation and experience afford us good reason to believe that the death of the body will not destroy the soul ; yet it is impossible for us to judge from the mere light of nature, whether, within the range of an unknown fu-

ture, some other event may not occur by which the soul itself will be annihilated. But revelation solves all doubts on the subject, and for ever fixes a negative on such a notion. The testimony of Scripture is express, that our future life will last for ever and ever. The worm prepared for the wicked is declared to be a deathless worm, and the pleasures reserved for the righteous to be endless pleasures.⁵

And secondly, while reason affords a strong presumption that the soul lives after death, it has little or no light to communicate respecting the resurrection of the body. But there is no point on which revelation more emphatically dwells than on the certain approach of a day, when *all that are in the graves* shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth—when the dead shall be raised, and the living changed; when our mortal frame shall be proved to have been the seed of a spiritual body; when our souls shall be united to that body; and thus the whole law of death be finally and for ever abolished, through Jesus Christ our Lord.⁶

⁵ Matt. xxv, 46; Mark ix, 43, 44; *comp.* Ps. xvi, 11; Dan. xii, 3; John xi, 26, &c.

⁶ John v, 28, 29; 1 Cor. xv, 35—57; Rev. xx, 11—15.

SECTION II.

ON THE MORAL GOVERNMENT OF GOD.

THE reality and eternal duration of a future life being allowed, it becomes of unspeakable importance, to ascertain by what means we may insure or promote its being a happy state of existence to ourselves.

Christianity teaches us that our condition hereafter depends upon our conduct in the present life; and that in a future and ever-enduring world, we shall all be rewarded or punished according to our works. Now, in this general notion of the responsibility of man, and of the government of God by rewards and punishments, there is nothing which contradicts either reason or experience. On the contrary we actually find ourselves placed under the same kind of government in this lower world. Our happiness here is in a great degree placed in our own power, and we are forewarned by nature that certain actions will procure us pleasure, and that others as surely will be productive of pain. Most of the enjoyments of life are bestowed upon us as an effect—that is a *reward*—of some exertion on our parts, and much of the pain which we suffer, is the consequence of our own inadvertence; it is a *punishment* which we bring upon our-

selves. A man who thrusts his arm into the fire, is punished for his folly by the agony which he endures, and by the loss of his limb.

Experience moreover proves, that present pleasure can be safely pursued only within certain limits, and under proper regulation; and that watchfulness and self-denial are absolutely essential to our temporal prosperity. If we prefer our known future advantage to immediate gratification, we seldom fail to meet with our reward; but, on the contrary, if we refuse to walk in the ways of wisdom, punishment is sure to overtake us. Often does it happen, that, after long delays, at an unexpected moment, and in a degree which seems out of all proportion to our offence, we reap the bitter fruits of our carelessness or our folly. The imprudence of a passing hour may entail upon us a *life* of perplexity and sorrow.

When therefore revealed religion declares that we are in a state of trial with a view to futurity; that, in the eternal world to come, we shall enjoy or suffer the consequences of our present conduct; and that, in order to obtain happiness hereafter, we must here exercise continual watchfulness and self-denial—it declares those things which are precisely similar to the known constitution of nature and order of Providence. It is certain, therefore, that the doctrine of Christianity, on this subject, *agrees with experience*.

These premises being clear, the question immediately arises, what line of conduct we must pursue—what kind of life we must lead—in order to obtain a happy futurity. Christianity answers, “A *virtuous* line of conduct, a life of *righteousness*.” We learn

from the Holy Scriptures, that God not only governs his rational creatures by a system of rewards and punishments, but applies that system according to a *moral* rule—that he is the *moral* Governor of the world—that, in the boundless future, he will reward the *good* with happiness, and punish the *wicked* with misery. And does this further development of the government of God over mankind also agree with experience? Is it rendered credible—is it confirmed to be probable and even true—by those things which we know in ourselves, and observe in the world around us? Does experience furnish us with any proofs that God, the rewarder and punisher of mankind, is on the side of *virtue*?

That these questions may be safely answered in the affirmative, will appear from the following considerations.

I. Every one knows that man is gifted (in distinction we may presume from all the inferior animals) not only with the powers of reason, but with the faculty of conscience, by which we judge of right and wrong in our own actions. We may safely aver, that there is no man living, whose intellectual powers are not entirely obscured, who is destitute of this faculty; and it seems probable, that the exercise of it is uniformly connected with a sense of the existence of some superior power, to whom we are responsible. The allusion made to this subject by the apostle Paul corresponds with the results of observation: “When the Gentiles which have not the law (i. e. the written law) do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which

shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their *conscience* also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another.”¹

The conscience is there justly described as bearing witness in the soul,—as declaring to a man whether the action which he has done or is about to do, is right or wrong. His thoughts accuse him on the one hand, and excuse him on the other, but it is his conscience which *decides* the question. Now the conscience, like all our other natural faculties, is liable to great abuse. It may be blinded by ignorance, hardened by sin, and perverted by a mistaken education; and hence its decisions may sometimes be scarcely perceptible, and at other times erroneous. But although the *eye* may be darkened, distorted, or even destroyed, the *light* is in its very nature unchangeable; and the “law written on the heart”—a “work,” as I have always believed, of the Holy Spirit—is a light communicated to the soul, by which the conscience is directed and rectified.

Where the intellectual powers are but little unfolded, as among the more savage tribes of the heathen, this light does indeed appear to be extremely faint. It shines in darkness; and “the darkness” comprehends it not.² But although the superficial observer, who is probably unacquainted even with their language, may be unable to discover in men so untutored, any traces of the moral principle, there can be little question that it exists, and might presently be called into action, should their mental faculties become better cultivated.

¹ Rom. ii, 14, 15.

² See John i, 5.

Again, it may be remarked, that persons are sometimes led by a misapprehension of duty, not only to adopt practices which the law of God does not require, but even fearfully to break that law; as Saul did when, under the influence of “a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge,” he persecuted the unoffending Christians. But such facts afford no proof whatsoever—not even any fair presumption—that the law is not written on the hearts of all men. For although a man’s conscience may be so perverted, that he will commit a bad action, under a notion that he is doing his duty, no example has ever been adduced of a man’s conscientiously approving an action, because of its badness; for example, *because* it is treacherous, cruel, or unjust. It may be safely affirmed, that all men every where *approve* of truth, justice, and benevolence. There is a moral principle in every man’s heart, which compels him to acknowledge that, abstractedly, these qualities are right and good. And what is this principle but the law of God made manifest in the soul?

It appears then, that what we know and feel of the constitution of our nature, and of the working of our own minds, affords an unquestionable evidence that our Creator is on the side of virtue, and that, when the sacred writers call upon us to lead a life of holiness, integrity, and charity, their voice is in perfect unison with the voice of God, *heard in the secret of the heart.*

The more the conscience is enlightened by this inward monitor, the less it will respond to certain parts of the moral systems of the ancient heathen philoso-

phers—those parts for example, which encourage the pride of man, and make allowance for ambition, suicide, and revenge? and the less it will sanction that false prophet Mahomet, in fanning the violent and voluptuous propensities of our nature; but between the law written on the heart, and the law written in Scripture, there is a perfect accordance. Not a single article can be found in the code of Christianity, to which the most enlightened conscience can refuse its assent. Yet, while the inward and the outward law go hand in hand, justifying and confirming each other, it is always to be remembered, that Christianity develops our moral duties to a much greater extent, than does merely natural religion.

The Scriptures make known to us the attributes of Jehovah with a fulness and precision, to which our unassisted reason never could have attained; and, with an equal completeness, they describe the behaviour towards him, which those attributes demand. They reveal the new relations of the Son and the Holy Spirit, and insist on our corresponding duties; in short, (as we have already remarked,) they unfold the law of God in all its strength and spirituality—in all the glorious variety of its details.

Now I conceive that in the agreement between the law written on the heart, and the law written in the book, and in the extension of the latter beyond the natural limits of the former, we have two cogent and distinct evidences, that the Scriptures are the book of God.

II. Furnished as we are by the Author of our being with a moral principle, it is impossible for us to con-

ceive that God will reward and punish mankind in a future world, by any other than the moral rule. We should be utterly at a loss to account for the contrary, which would be directly opposed to that sense of right and wrong, which he has so graciously interwoven with our very nature. But that God, in the eternal future, will reward virtue with happiness, and punish vice with misery, may be safely inferred from the fact, that in various respects he does so now, in such a manner and degree as must lead us to expect the completion of this his righteous government, in the world to come.

In the first place, every one knows that many breaches of the moral law are followed by punishment in the way of natural consequence. The liar finds his punishment in perplexity; the miser, in the terrors of apprehended poverty; the dissolute, in the wreck of his fortunes; the sensualist, in the debasement of his intellect; the drunkard, in the destruction of his health. Folly and imprudence also are closely connected with vice, and partake of its nature; and that they are punished with suffering and distress in the present life, is a fact which most men know from their own experience. On the other hand, virtue and her sure allies, wisdom and prudence, are undoubted promoters of sound health, mental tranquillity, and substantial prosperity; and these surely are no despicable rewards.

Secondly—that representative of God in our bosoms, *conscience*, is not only appointed to be the judge of our actions, but is charged, even here, with the office of rewarding and punishing; and the more that faculty is brought under the influence of the Spirit of

God, the more rapidly and vigorously it performs this office. He that is of a good conscience, like him that is "of a merry heart, hath a continual feast;"³ and no man can deny the apostle's doctrine, "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God."⁴ On the other hand, how painful, how tormenting, is the feeling of remorse—the intelligible, unwelcome, forerunner of the worm which dieth not!

Thirdly—that very moral sense which leads men to condemn vice and to approve of virtue in themselves, compels them also to estimate others by the same rule; and since, for our happiness in this world, we depend, in a considerable degree, one upon another, the approbation of our fellow-men is no contemptible recompence of virtue, and their disapprobation no trifling punishment of vice. Who does not feel the worth of a good character? Who is not aware that it opens a door to many of the most valuable enjoyments of the present state? On the contrary, who does not know that a bad character is an unceasing source of mortification and uneasiness.

Fourthly—the authority of parents over children, and the civil government of states are both natural; for such is the constitution of our nature, that they are necessary to our well-being in the world, and they clearly belong to the known order of God's providence. When, therefore, the child is punished by his parents because he has committed an action which disturbs the order of the family, and when the criminal is pun-

³ Prov. xv, 15.

⁴ 1 John iii, 21.

ished by the state because he has been guilty of an offence which endangers the peace of society; these are instances, *as far as they go*, of the moral government of God. But when the child is punished—or punished the more severely—because his action is *vicious in itself*; and when, for the same reason, the offender against society (as it frequently happens) is prosecuted more readily, convicted more certainly, and visited with a heavier penalty, than he otherwise would have been—it is plain that we are then furnished with unquestionable examples of God's moral government. True indeed it is, that, in consequence of the corrupt and disordered state of mankind, actions are sometimes rewarded, although they are vicious, and punished although they are virtuous. Yet actions are never rewarded as vicious, nor punished as virtuous. Although the rule of rewarding virtue *as such*, and of punishing vice *as such*, may often be interrupted, it is never reversed.

When, therefore, we consider the effects produced by virtue and vice on our bodies, minds, and circumstances; the pleasures bestowed, and the pains inflicted by conscience; the approbation and contempt of our fellow-men; and the rewards and punishments of domestic and civil life—we cannot fail to perceive that the righteous and the righteous only, are on the side of the divine administration. They are the friends of God—the heirs of his favour and protection. On the other hand, it is equally clear that the wicked are rebels against his government, and exposed to the vials of his wrath. Happiness is the *natural* consequence of virtue, and misery the *natural* consequence

of vice ; and we have reason to believe that the tendencies of virtue and vice to produce their own consequences, are *uniform* and *invariable*. Like the God of nature himself, by whom they have been fixed, they do not, cannot, change.

While these conclusions rest upon obvious grounds, we ought never to forget that our present state of being is an imperfect one—that we are living in a degenerate and disordered world. Hence it follows that these settled tendencies of virtue and vice, though always the same, and always, as it were, *alive*, are exposed to innumerable obstructions, and are seldom carried into full effect. The pains naturally produced by vice are here often avoided ; and the pleasures bestowed by virtue, are mingled with many sorrows.

The righteous are often afflicted, oppressed, and persecuted ; the wicked often prosper, often triumph. But, while the proper tendencies of virtue and vice may well be deemed unchangeable, the obstructions, which are here permitted to oppose their effect, belong to the circumstances of this present world, and are in their nature temporal.⁵

⁵ Those who are acquainted with the writings of Bishop Butler, will easily perceive that many of the sentiments contained in the present section are borrowed from his “ *Analogy*.” I would earnestly recommend this admirable work to the attentive perusal of every inquirer after truth. In the mean time I am happy, like other writers on Christian evidences, to avail myself of the resources of the bishop’s great and truly original mind.

In his chapter on the moral government of God, Butler justly observes, that there is an essential tendency in virtue, to procure for its possessor, not only happiness, but influence and power. Even in the present disordered state of things, an individual who maintains integrity, self-denial, and charity, in his whole life and

What then are the conclusions from these premises, which force themselves on the mind of every inquirer after truth, who takes into view the holiness and omnipotence of God? They appear to be as follows—that virtue, militant here, will be triumphant hereafter; that the first fruits of God's moral government, which are now perceptible, are the sure tokens of the future perfection of the system; that, in the world to come, all things which now appear to be morally uneven in the lot of mankind, will be balanced and rectified; and finally, that, when all obstructions are removed, the essential tendencies of virtue to produce happiness, and of vice to produce misery, will operate in their full force, without interruption and for ever. We have already considered the natural evidence of a future life. *This* is its moral proof, of which the

conversation, is sure to obtain considerable influence over others. He rules over them in the authority of virtue and love; and Butler has clearly shown that if a large body of people—a nation for example—were united in the practice of virtue—if all their private conduct, and all their public acts were ordered by these principles—they would obtain universal dominion. With a sway at once gentle and irresistible, they would rule over the world.

It is remarkable that, in accordance with these sentiments, the Bible promises to the righteous, not only future happiness, but future *power*. In the world of spirits nothing will resist the paramount influence, the *natural omnipotence*, of virtue. “If we suffer with Christ,” says the apostle, “we shall also *reign* with him.”* “And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers, even as I received of my Father.”† “To him that overcometh I will grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in his throne.”‡

* 2 Tim. ii, 12.

† Rev. ii, 26, 27.

‡ Rev. iii, 21.

more we reflect on the subject, the more we shall feel the strength.

It now only remains for us to compare these results of experience and the reasoning to which they lead, with the declarations of Scripture. We open our Bibles, and there we find the fulness of light on this, to us, the most important of subjects—our moral responsibility, our future destiny. The sacred volume declares, under multiplied forms, yet in the plainest terms, that God is the *moral* Governor of the world—that he abhors vice, and delights in virtue, rewards the righteous, and punishes the wicked.

Let the sinner tremble before the light of revelation, which fully detects him as the enemy of God. The Bible assures us that, even here, “the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest;”⁶ that their momentary prosperity will but aggravate their future woe; and that, finally, they will be “punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord.”

Let the good man rejoice under the bright beams of “the Sun of Righteousness,” who has arisen upon him “with healing in his wings.” The Bible declares that he is the reconciled child of God—the object of his heavenly Father’s love; that even here his portion is “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding;” and that his light afflictions, which are but for a moment, shall only be the means of better fitting him for his eternal inheritance. In the world to come, he shall be made partaker of the fulness of joy; he shall shine “as the brightness of the firmament,” and “as the stars for ever and ever.”

⁶ Isa. lvii, 20.

To conclude, the light of Scripture respecting the moral government of God, and future rewards and punishments, as well as respecting the law itself, far exceeds the light of nature, both in clearness and extent. Yet with that fainter, narrower light, it is in just accordance—in perfect harmony. The analogy between the declarations of religion on these topics, and that which we see, and feel, and know, is palpable and undoubted. Well may we therefore conclude, that the objections which some men urge against the Christian doctrine of judgment to come, are founded on a fallacy. Well may we draw the inference that Christianity is indeed true, and that the God of nature is the God of the Bible.

SECTION III.

ON THE SINFUL AND ENSLAVED CONDITION OF MAN.

MANY of the doctrines of revealed religion, although proposed to our faith on grounds satisfactory to reason, are far beyond the reach of our own powers either of reason or observation. But there is one truth discovered to us by Christianity, which, now that we know it, is so palpable and obvious, that we can hardly imagine how great would have been our ignorance on the subject, did we not possess the Scriptures. The truth to which I allude, is the universal sinfulness of mankind, and their consequent alienation from God.

That the conscience reproves for iniquity independently of the light of a written law, must indeed be fully allowed, and that mankind without Christianity are by no means destitute of a sense of transgression, may be inferred from the general use, among the heathen, of expiatory sacrifices. But it is only through the medium of revealed religion, that we obtain a proper conception of the nature of sin, or are enabled to form a right estimate of the moral condition of mankind.

Although the ancient philosophers of Greece and Rome pleaded for virtue, their views of sin were miserably defective. Socrates, indeed, declared his opinion that certain vices—particularly injustice and ingratitude—were breaches of those “laws of the gods” which are known and understood by all men;¹ but with the most of these uninspired reasoners, sin was nothing more than a “missing of the mark,” as it regards the good order of society, or the general *fitness* of things. Could the unassisted powers of human reason have sufficed for the purpose, these moralists, so gifted with talents, so cultivated by study, would surely have discerned the true character of sin; but they made no such discovery. Nor have those modern speculators been more successful who dare to speak of sin, as if it were of small account—a casual and temporary evil, which will in the end be productive of greater good!

But what says the Bible on this subject? It says that sin is the transgression of the perfect law of a holy God—an offence against the moral Governor of the universe—which, although varying in its *degrees*, is so malignant in its *nature*, that it separates us from his favour, and for ever exposes us to his wrath. “The law of the Lord is perfect,”² and “sin is the transgression of the law.”³ “The way of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord.”⁴ “Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil; of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile.”⁵

¹ Xenoph. Memorab. lib. iv, 4.

² Psalm xix, 7.

³ 1 John iii, 4.

⁴ Prov. xv, 9.

⁵ Rom. ii, 8, 9.

Since Jehovah himself is the Being against whom all our sins are committed, their heinousness is greatly aggravated in our view, when we reflect on his glorious attributes. To offend against *omnipotence*, is desperate folly; against *perfect holiness*—desperate pollution; against *unutterable goodness*—desperate ingratitude.

Now it is in the Scripture only that the attributes of our heavenly Father are fully made known to us. And, therefore, it is only through the religion of the Bible, that we can obtain an adequate notion of sin. But the cardinal point revealed to us in Scripture, and *only* in Scripture, without a knowledge of which it is impossible for any man to form a *full* estimate of sin, is this—that God so loved us as to send his only begotten Son into the world, to be a sacrifice for our sins. How infinitely deep and malignant in the sight of God—how strangely different from the weak idea of it embraced by ancient philosophy or modern deism—must be that evil, which demanded so exalted a sacrifice; which called Immanuel from his throne of glory to take our nature upon him, and to suffer and die for sinners!

In like manner it is evident that our apprehension of that by which the law is transgressed, must be in proportion to our acquaintance with the law itself. Now where but in the sacred writings, shall we look for a full account of the holiness and comprehensiveness of the law of God? Where, but in them, shall we learn the lesson of its variety and completeness; of its spiritual and searching nature; of its divine controul, not only over our words and actions, but

over our thoughts, motives, and dispositions? A man who imbibes the scriptural account of God and of his law, and then examines his own conduct, will soon be driven from the strong holds of self-righteousness. He will be constrained to confess that he is a miserable sinner. His heartfelt cry will be like that of Job: "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes."⁶

Finally, since sin is of an extent precisely equal to that of the law—including the omission of duty as well as the commission of wrong, and especially that neglect of God, which so awfully pervades our fallen race—no man can fairly deny the doctrine of Scripture, that "*the whole world lieth in wickedness.*"⁷ "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."⁸ "We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles that they are all under sin; as it is written, there is none righteous, NO NOT ONE; there is none that understandeth; there is none that seeketh after God; they are all gone out of the way; they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, NO NOT ONE.... Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and ALL THE WORLD may become GUILTY BEFORE GOD."⁹

All history, all experience, prove the correctness of this mournful picture. All men have sinned against the law of God, as it is written on their hearts; and those on whom the Scriptures are bestowed have

⁶ Job xlii, 5, 6.

⁷ 1 John v, 19.

⁸ Rom. iii, 23.

⁹ Rom. iii, 9—19; *comp.* Ps. xiv, 2, 3.

sinned against the same law, as it is more largely unfolded in the sacred volume. There are, however, two points connected with the subject, on which it may be desirable shortly to touch. It is, in the first place, a well known fact, that one man is tempted in one way, and another in another—that we all have our peculiarly *besetting* sins. Now Christianity teaches us that such is the essential unity of the law of God, that he who offends “in one point” is “guilty of all ;”¹ that is, he stands condemned as a transgressor against the one great system of divine holiness. I apprehend that this doctrine agrees with the decisions of conscience. No man who is truly brought under conviction of sin, will refuse to acknowledge that he has transgressed the law of God considered as a *whole*, and is therefore liable to the fulness of the curse. “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.”²

And secondly, although the restraints of education or of civil society, may protect many from those gross crimes of which others are guilty, yet experience and Scripture alike demonstrate, that the seeds of great offences are found in those bad dispositions to which all men are liable—the seed in point of nature, being identical with the plant. “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.”³ Hence we may learn that in order to form a just estimate of the character of man without grace, it is reasonable and even necessary to look at those cases in which his iniquity is the most developed, and therefore the most

¹ James, ii, 10.

² Ezek. xviii, 4.

³ 1 John iii, 15.

glaring. In the horrors of the gambling house; in the extremes of lasciviousness or treachery; in the wickedness of felons; in the merciless stroke of war; in the cruelties of the slave trade and slavery—we find ample proofs that (without the redeeming influence of religion) our *whole* species is corrupt and vicious.

Let us now apply these premises to our general argument. The Bible, which alone fully reveals the nature and character of sin, expressly declares that all men have sinned and are guilty in the sight of God. Although it is chiefly from the light of Scripture that we obtain a knowledge of this doctrine, we are quite sure, now that we have obtained it, that the doctrine is true. It is proved to be so, by our observation of the world around us, and by a review of our own conduct. On this fundamental point, therefore, the declarations of Scripture agree with experience; *they are fully confirmed by unquestionable facts.*

But although the doctrine in question is now so clearly ascertained, it is one which men, in their own wisdom, appear to be utterly incapable of discovering; one also from which they turn away with an instinctive aversion, because it is totally subversive of the pride of the human heart. I conclude therefore that the book, which pours forth a blaze of light on the subject, and, unwelcome as this truth may be, holds up a conviction of it as essential and fundamental in religion, cannot be a book of man's invention. It must surely have been given to us by Him who knows all things, who searches the hearts of his children, and who mercifully detects the disease, that he may apply the remedy.

That all men have transgressed the law of God, and are sinners in his sight, is a *moral phenomenon* of immense importance, for which the uninspired wisdom of man is incapable of accounting. But the Scriptures state the original cause of this *phenomenon*; they also account for its continuance, in a manner so reasonable and so accordant with experience, as to win the assent of every candid mind.

It cannot be conceived that God, who is perfectly holy, created man *unholy*. Such an idea is directly opposed to the fair presumptions of reason, and to the dictates even of natural religion. It is in the Scriptures however, and in them only, that the contrary is expressly revealed; for, at the close of the six days' work, "God" (it is written) "saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was VERY GOOD."⁴

This description applied with peculiar force to man, whom God had created "in his own image," after his "likeness;"⁵ that is, had endowed him with reason, power, virtue, and immortality. With regard to virtue in particular, Solomon declares that God made man "*upright*."⁶ But although created virtuous, and void of all defilement, our first parents were liable to temptation, and were made free to choose between good and evil; and no sooner had they been betrayed into an act of disobedience, that is, of *sin*, than the chain of love and union which had bound them to their Creator, was severed. Their original natural virtue was lost for ever; their bodies were condemned to death; and, morally, they were dead already; prone

⁴ Gen. i, 31.

⁵ Gen. i, 26, 27.

⁶ Ecc. vii, 29.

to wickedness, and destitute of any power of their own to perform a good action. Such is the condition of those persons who are “dead in trespasses and sins”—a condition common by nature to all mankind.

It is a proverb familiar to reason as well as to religion, that no man can bring “a clean thing out of an unclean,”⁷ and the Scriptures teach us that the moral condition of Adam was transmitted to his descendants of all generations. “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so *death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned* Through the offence of one many are *dead* By one man’s disobedience many were made *sinners.*”⁸ It is evident that the *death* which is here described by the apostle as passing upon all men, in consequence of Adam’s transgression, is not merely the return of the body to the dust from which it came, but the alienation of the soul from God—a spiritual death—the total corruption of the human heart. For after confessing that in his *flesh* (that is, in his fallen nature) there dwelt “*no good thing*,” he cries out, “Who shall deliver me from the body of this *death*?”⁹ Again he argues, that if “Christ died *for all*, then were *all dead.*”¹ Nor is it Paul alone who speaks of this spiritual death into which our whole species is fallen, for the same doctrine was familiar to the other apostles.² Our Saviour himself also speaks of mankind, as “lost,”³ that is, “*perished*,” and declares that those

⁷ Job xiv, 4.

⁸ Rom. v, 12, 15, 19.

⁹ Rom. vii, 18, 24; *comp.* Rom. viii, 6.

¹ 2 Cor. v, 14.

² See 1 John iii, 14; 1 Pet. iv, 6.

³ τὸ ἀπολωλός, Matt. xviii, 11.

who hear his word are “passed from *death* unto life.”⁴

At other times, the same moral state is described under the figure of mortal disease. “The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked (or diseased).”⁵ “The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it: but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores; they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.”⁶ Such was the mental condition of a people who were blessed, above all the nations of the earth, with the light of God’s countenance. And the same description applies to our fallen race in all ages, for “the *heart* of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead.”⁷

Now, as, in the history of the fall of Adam, the Scriptures give a clear account of the first entrance of sin into the world; so, in the doctrine that the *heart* of man is naturally corrupt, and dead to holiness, they afford us a satisfactory explanation of the tremendous fact, *that all men are sinners*. This is the true account, this the intelligible reason, of the universal ungodliness of our species; of the bloody and perfidious deeds which stain the pages of history; and of all those open and secret sins, which, in various degrees, and under different forms, have polluted the life and conduct of every man living.

⁴ John v, 24, 25.

⁵ Jer. xvii, 9.

⁶ Isa. i, 5, 6.

⁷ Ecc. ix, 3; *comp.* Gen. vi, 5.

When Sir Isaac Newton had published his theory of attraction, and proved that it explained, with nice precision, a variety of known phenomena—accounting equally for the apple's falling to the ground, and for the orderly courses of the planets—all men were constrained to acknowledge the correctness of his philosophy. The agreement between the principle which he advanced, and a number of acknowledged facts, afforded an unquestionable proof that his theory was true. In like manner, when the Bible proposes the corruption of man as a principle ; and when this principle is found to afford a satisfactory explanation of the appearances of sin, under every possible shape or combination, we are equally compelled to confess that the doctrine of Scripture is true ; and as we trace Newton's discovery on a physical subject to the unequalled powers of his reason, so do we ascribe the discovery made to us in Scripture, on this moral and spiritual subject, to the illumination of the Holy Spirit, who alone searches the heart of man, and reveals its true condition.

Now that we are acquainted with Newton's theory of attraction, it appears so palpable, that we can scarcely account for its not having been before discerned ; and now that we know the secret of human corruption, we are astonished that men should never have detected this obvious cause of their own transgressions. Yet, in reality, both these truths lay deeply hidden—the one from every superficial observer of nature ; the other from all men, without revelation. And there is nothing by which the discovery in either

case is rendered so admirable, as by its simplicity—the native force of truth with which it commends itself to every understanding.

But we have not yet stated the whole of our case; for, as the wickedness of man is owing to the corruption of his heart, and his corruption to his fall—a chain, of which no man can deny the consistency—so his fall is traced in Scripture to the devices of a powerful and malicious being, the prince of fallen angels, the enemy of God and man, and the author of evil. It was the devil who tempted our first parents into sin, and no sooner had they sinned than they became subject to his dominion. And such continues to be the wretched lot of their degenerate descendants; they are under the rule of Satan; they are in bondage to the power of darkness. In their natural ignorance and sinfulness, they are the willing subjects of “*the god of this world, who hath blinded the minds of them which believe not.*”⁸ They walk “*according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.*”⁹ “Ye are of your father the devil,” said Jesus to the unbelieving Jews, “and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it.”¹

Nor is the power and work of the great adversary of souls restricted to unregenerate men. He is de-

⁸ 2 Cor. iv, 4.

⁹ Eph. ii, 1, 2.

¹ John viii, 44; *comp.* Matt. xiii, 38, 39; 1 John iii, 8, 10.

scribed as the tempter, tormentor, and unwearied foe, even of the children of God. "Be sober, be vigilant," said Peter to the "elect" though "scattered" church, "because your adversary the devil as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour."² "Put on the whole armour of God," says another apostle to a community of Christian converts, "that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil; for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."³ On other occasions, Paul declares that it was the devil who hindered his services in the gospel,⁴ and that the thorn in his flesh, by which he was so sorely afflicted, was "the messenger of Satan to buffet him"⁵—testimonies which agree with the doctrine of the apostle John, who describes the same restless being as the author of persecution,⁶ and as the "accuser" of the brethren, "which accused them before God, day and night."⁷

I am well aware that some persons who make a profession of Christianity, are prone to set aside these plain Scriptural declarations, and pretend to believe that Satan is a mere figure of poetry, and has no personal existence.

But I consider it impossible for any one to take a broad, impartial view of the state of mankind—to visit in his mind the habitations of cruelty, and the obscene haunts of an abominable idolatry—without

² 1 Pet. v, 8; *comp.* i, 1, 2.

³ Eph. vi, 11, 12.

⁴ 1 Thess. ii, 18.

⁵ 2 Cor. xii, 7.

⁶ Rev. ii, 10.

⁷ Rev. xii, 10.

arriving at a strong conviction that our degraded species is not only prone to wickedness, but exposed to the power of some deceitful and malignant being. When we direct our thoughts, in succession, to Asia, with her hundreds of millions of idolaters; to Africa, with her population sunk in night, and with the atrocities of her slave trade; to America, where man is in chains, and those chains are rivetted and justified by the two nations upon earth most conspicuous for their love of liberty; to Europe, where the professed disciples of a religion of peace, have been engaged for a long course of centuries, in mutual carnage—we are compelled to confess that man, corrupt in himself, has fallen an easy prey to the tyranny of the devil.

The declarations of the Bible on this awful and affecting subject, coincide with the dictates of common sense, exact observation, and long-continued experience. And the notion, which appears to have been entertained by men of all ages and countries, of the existence of such an adversary, is in itself no trifling evidence that these declarations are true.

With respect to awakened Christian believers, these will generally be prepared to confess, that they have experienced the influence of an evil Power who plays upon their own treacherous hearts—the enemy without, practising on the traitor within. They well know that there is one who tempts them to unbelief and sin, harasses them with doubts, torments them with accusations, and at times suggests ideas to their minds, which they are utterly ashamed of harbouring, and which they can trace to no other origin. Such

is the work of Satan, as it is described by the sacred writers! Such is his work as it is familiar to individual experience!

Now by what means a being who doubtless was created holy, lost his first estate,⁸ and became not only wicked himself, but the author of evil in this lower world, the Scriptures do not reveal; and it were worse than idle for us to conjecture. Neither is it possible for us to fathom the purposes for which God has seen meet to permit this worst of enemies to prevail for a season over men, and to bring them under bondage to sin. For our present argument it suffices, that the doctrines of the Bible on these mournful topics—doctrines which that book alone has fully unfolded to mankind—agree with *experience*, and are confirmed by *fact*.

⁸ John viii, 44; Jude 6.

SECTION IV.

ON REPENTANCE AND MEDIATION.

THE sentiments which men entertain on the subject of repentance are ever found to be deep and extensive, exactly in proportion to the depth and extent of their views of sin ; just as our estimate of recovery from a disease, is commensurate with our notion of the virulence and danger of the disease itself. Certain it is, however, that as the Scriptures alone reveal the true character of sin, and the universal sinfulness of mankind, so it is only in the Bible, that we find an adequate account of the nature and use of repentance, and a call to repent, extended, without exception, to the whole human race. “Those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem ? I tell you nay ; but *except ye repent*, ye shall all likewise perish.”¹ God “commandeth all men every where to repent.”² “Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”³

Repentance, according to the account given of it in Scripture, consists of two parts, which though distinct

¹ Luke xiii, 4, 5.

² Acts xvii, 30.

³ Matt. iii, 2.

are indissolubly connected—sorrow for past sin, and such a change of mind, as leads to newness of life. And on both these do the sacred writers insist, as essential to the Christian character and acceptable to God our Father. “Cleanse your hands ye sinners, and purify your hearts ye double-minded. Be afflicted, and mourn and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness; humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.”⁴ “Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”⁵ What could be more gracious than the following exhortation and promise addressed to a corrupt and rebellious people?—“Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well, &c. . . . Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, and though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”⁶

The passages which have now been selected, and which are sufficient to serve the purpose of examples, are few from among a multitude; for the whole tenor of Scripture—the united voice of prophets, apostles, and our Lord himself—calls on a guilty and degenerate world to repent of transgression and return to God. No man, therefore, who imbibes the spirit of

⁴ James iv, 8—10.

⁵ Isa. lvii, 15.

⁶ Isa. i, 16—18.

Christianity can refuse to allow that repentance is good in itself; that it is well pleasing to our heavenly Father; and that it forms an *indispensable* link in that chain which alone can terminate in the salvation of man. These are points, on which all who appeal to the Scriptures as the test of their opinions, are generally found to agree, and certainly there are no persons who more warmly insist upon them, than those who entertain orthodox views of evangelical religion.

But the question for our consideration is this—Would repentance be of any avail for our reconciliation to God, and for our eternal salvation, without a Mediator? This question our Lord has most impressively answered in the negative—"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but *by me*."⁷ No wonder then, that he called upon a sinful generation, not only to repent, but to "believe the gospel."⁸ No wonder that Paul also, both in his public and private ministry, and to Jews as well as Greeks, testified at once "repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ."⁹

But the Scriptures go further. While they class repentance towards God, and faith in the Mediator *together*, and uphold them to our view as inseparable in the work of salvation, they clearly show that the free mercy of God in Christ Jesus, is the *sole* procuring cause of our redemption here, and of our eternal happiness hereafter. Contrition for past sin, a change of heart, amendment of life, and even faith itself, which lies at the root of them, are severally the

⁷ John xiv, 6.

⁸ Mark i, 15.

⁹ Acts xx, 21.

effects of the grace of God, and are necessary to our present and eternal welfare; but the cause of that welfare—the fountain of all our hopes—is the love of our heavenly Father, flowing through a crucified Redeemer. “God was in *Christ* reconciling the world unto himself; not imputing their trespasses unto them.”¹ “This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.”²

The notion that repentance has any inherent efficacy by which it procures the forgiveness of sin, and the salvation of the sinner, is opposed to the whole *scope* of Scripture. The Bible declares that “he who committeth sin is of the devil;” and that, in order to escape from its penal consequences, we must place our reliance not on any work of ours, or on any condition of our minds, but solely on the Mediator, whom God in his free mercy has appointed to “destroy the works of the devil.”³

The promise of this deliverer was made to our first parents almost immediately after their fall; “The seed of the woman,” said Jehovah to the serpent, “shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”⁴ Here it is obscurely indicated, that the Messiah was to be incarnate, to suffer, and to conquer—points which are severally developed in the series of prophecies by which this original promise was succeeded. In these, the Messiah is held out to view in the character of a Saviour, divine and yet human in his nature, who should *mediate* between God and his people—a mighty Prince, to be born of the seed of David, who should undergo

¹ 2 Cor. v, 19.

² 1 John v, 11.

³ 1 John iii, 8.

⁴ Gen. iii, 15.

great affliction, and in whom the righteousness of God for the salvation of the world should be fully manifested.

His *vicarious sufferings*, more especially, are described by the prophet Isaiah with the utmost precision. "Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and he was afflicted, (or, as in Lowth's version, "It was exacted, and he was made answerable,") yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth."⁵

While such was the language of prophecy, that of *type* was almost equally intelligible. The sacrifice of animals even before the flood, when, probably, no use was made of them for food;⁶ the burnt offerings made by Noah, Abraham, and Job; the intended sacrifice of Isaac, who was Abraham's only son by Sarah, and heir of the promise; the lamb of the passover; the lamb of the daily burnt-offering; the bullock and the goat slain for the sins of the people on the day of atonement; the ratification of the covenant with the

⁵ Isa. liii, 4—7.

⁶ It appears that permission to eat animal food was not given to man until after the flood.—See Gen. ix, 3; *comp.* i, 29.

blood of peace-offerings sprinkled both on the book and on all the people—these and many similar rites, when viewed under the light of the gospel, admit of a clear explanation. In the first place, they were plain indications of the *principle* that repentance has no natural or inherent efficacy to procure forgiveness, and that “without shedding of blood is no remission.”⁷ And secondly, they were the expressive shadows of the Mediator to come, who was to make an atonement for the sins of mankind—whose blood was to cleanse from *all sin*.

In his personal appearances to the patriarchs as the Angel of the covenant, the Son of God bore the character of a Mediator—one who, in his gracious dealings with his people, acted on behalf of God even the Father. But when he became incarnate and was about to commence his ministry, he was introduced by his forerunner to the attention of the people, under the peculiar notion, that he was to make an atonement for sin. “Behold the LAMB OF GOD who taketh away the sin of the world!”⁸

Among the many truths which the New Testament declares, *this* is ever upheld as primary and fundamental, and is wrought into the whole substance of the volume. While the fact of his crucifixion is detailed with great force and exactness by all the four evangelists, the conversations of our Saviour, and the apostolic epistles, contain evidences at once luminous and abundant, that his death was propitiatory—that “he suffered, the *just* for the *unjust*, that he might bring us to God.”

⁷ Heb. ix, 22.

⁸ John i, 29.

But although the atonement made by the Son of God on the cross is the centre of our subject, it is not his only act of mediation, under the dispensation of the gospel. He mediates between God and man, in all his offices—as our prophet, by whom the truth was revealed to us, and who still teaches us by his Spirit ; as our High Priest, who pleads our cause, bestows on us his daily blessing, and ever lives to make intercession for us ; as our Sovereign, who is head over all things to his church ; as our Judge to whom we must render the account of our stewardship, and who will finally bestow on his children the gift of everlasting life.

Having thus briefly stated the scriptural doctrines of repentance and mediation, we have now to show that these doctrines agree with experience, and recommend themselves to every candid mind, as reasonable and true.⁹

I. Nothing can more readily approve itself to our reason, than the testimony of Scripture respecting the acceptableness and necessity of repentance. The sorrow of a child because of transgression against his father, is well pleasing to the parent as an evidence of *sincerity*, as an effect of *love*, and as a pledge of *improvement*. What then can be more reasonable than the Christian's belief that the penitence of a sinner is approved by our heavenly Father, and excites the joy of the angels in heaven ?¹

Again, if we reflect on our sinful condition by nature and admit that the heavenly state is one of perfect

⁹ On the subject of the following argument, see Butler's Analogy, part ii, ch. v.

¹ Luke xv, 10.

purity—a state which, in the very nature of things, can be enjoyed only by the righteous—we cannot deny that a change of mind and (where life is prolonged) an amendment of conduct must be indispensable to our future happiness.

But, salutary and necessary as repentance is proved to be, there is much in the known course of Providence, which plainly denotes, that it is not *in itself* sufficient to remove the guilt of sin, or to deliver us from its consequences. The fortunes of the spendthrift are ruined. He bitterly regrets his folly and adopts the habits of sobriety and economy. It is most probable, nevertheless, that the ease and comfort of his former condition will never be restored to him. The intemperate man, who is hurried by his passions into the excess of personal indulgence, destroys his constitution. He repents and amends, but the deepest penitence, even when accompanied by abstinence from his former habits, will fail to renew his emaciated frame. The criminal, who has long persevered in breaking the laws of his country, is arraigned at the bar of justice, and is condemned to imprisonment or death. He repents with all sincerity; but his repentance has no effect in opening the prison door, or in staying the hand of the executioner.

It is utterly in vain, therefore, to object against Christianity, that it represents repentance as insufficient of itself to save us from the punishment of our sins; for the same objection would bear with equal force against that which is already visible in the government of God over mankind. On the other hand, from an actual knowledge of these analogous

cases, and a thousand others of similar character, we conclude that this scriptural view of repentance is both reasonable and true.

If we allow the perfect holiness of God, it is impossible for us to suppose, that a life of which the former part has been vicious, and the latter part virtuous, can be the same in his sight, as a life spent in virtue from beginning to end. But here again we may appeal to experience. The sinner returns with the sacrifice of a broken heart to an offended Deity. Under these circumstances, does conscience forego her office of condemning and punishing? Does remorse, the scourge which this just judge employs, abate its force and subside into nothing? So far otherwise, that the deeper the repentance, the more appalling becomes the recollection of past transgression—the more intolerable the pain which that recollection occasions. Absolutely *necessary* as is the penitence of such an offender—approved of God and rejoiced in by angels—it affords no peace to the offender himself. On the contrary, it breaks up his former tranquillity, nor can he again find repose, except in the *mercy* of God—that mercy which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

II. That *mediation* in the most general sense of the term is natural, no observer of nature can for a moment deny; for a large proportion of the comforts which we enjoy in life, and our very existence itself, are bestowed upon us through the intervention of others. To what a number of *middle agents*—each performing his own office in the economy of Providence—are we all indebted for our food, our raiment,

our habitations, our social pleasures, our mental cultivation, our intellectual habits !

But, to consider the subject in the more restricted scriptural view of our being saved from the punishment of sin, through the intervention of a mediator—who does not know, that *such* a mediation consists with the visible order of God's government, or in other words, *agrees with experience* ?

Although the ruined spendthrift, the decrepid sensualist, and the condemned criminal, may be destitute of all power to assist themselves, *yet, if their excesses have not gone beyond a certain point*, a brother, a physician, an intercessor, will often succeed in delivering them from the effects of their transgressions.

The world abounds with poverty, misery, and sorrow, and these are often the natural consequences of our own misconduct. It also contains many *remedies* for them, which for the most part are applied to their purpose, through the agency of others ; and which are so many examples not merely of goodness, but of *mercy*, in the known government of God. Now the punishments of a future state may equally follow sin, in the way of natural consequence ; and the prevention of them, through the mediation of Christ, is an infinitely higher, and yet a *precisely analogous*, example of the same divine mercy. Who then shall pretend that such a doctrine is strange or unnatural ?

But the *innocent* Jesus, it is objected, is represented as suffering in behalf of *guilty* sinners, and even in their stead. Such undoubtedly is the doctrine of Scripture, and to object to it, as if *we* were able to penetrate the counsels of an inscrutable Being, is a

great absurdity. But how doubly absurd does such an objection become, when we look into the world around us, and perceive on every side innumerable instances of the innocent suffering for the guilty !

For example—A son, although carefully educated, yields to his evil propensities, and pursues a course of dissipation. For a long time he may himself escape without punishment, but his parents mourn on his behalf, and mourn *in his stead*. Every act of vice or folly which he is known to commit, inflicts a fresh wound on the hearts of those who are guiltless of his offences ; and the more they regard the law of righteousness, the more deeply they suffer. Or, on the other hand, a parent neglects his business, and falls into intemperance ; and what in consequence is the lot of his innocent offspring ? They are deprived of a good education, reduced to poverty, and exposed to innumerable sorrows. In a temporal point of view, the sins of the father are visited on his children even to the “ third or fourth generation.”

Almost all the crimes which men commit, and even their minor faults, are the occasion, in various degrees, of misery or uncasiness to those who are no sharers in their guilt. More particularly, when we interfere on behalf of others, in order to prevent or remedy the afflictions in which they are involved by their own vice or folly, we seldom succeed in our object, except at the cost of much labour and anxiety, and often of loss and injury to ourselves. In all such cases, the pains which we endure are, strictly speaking, *vicarious*.

It is clear then that the suffering of the innocent

for the guilty is permitted under the government of God; and there can be no doubt that it is often *ordained* for the most beneficial purposes. Nor will any one who has a just sense of his own ignorance, and of the secrecy of the divine counsels, object to this providential appointment, even though the suffering in question be directly opposed (as is often the case) to the will of him who bears it.

But the apparent difficulty is considerably lessened, when the pains which men endure for the sake of others are voluntary. What sceptical mind is offended by the labours and difficulties which men so often undergo to serve a brother or a friend; or by the self-devotion of the sisters of charity to the painful duties of the hospital; or by the perils which a Howard braves in visiting infected prisons; or by the banishment and privations which a Schwartz or a Brainerd endures, in order to preach the gospel to the heathen?

Now when the Lord Jesus, during his sojourn on earth, submitted himself to a life of hardship and poverty—when he carried the sorrows and bare the sicknesses of the people—his sufferings on behalf of man were purely voluntary—the effect of native and free benevolence. And the Scriptures declare, that the same principle applies to his *whole* course of humiliation and suffering. Not only was it in obedience to the Father's will, but in perfect union of design with the Father, and in his own voluntary redeeming love, that he descended from the height of his glory, "took upon him the form of a servant," and "humbled himself unto death—even the death of the cross." "Christ loved the church and gave

himself for it.”² “Through the eternal Spirit,” he “offered himself without spot to God;”³ and he condescended to illustrate this act of merey by an allusion to human friendship. “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend.”⁴

Thus then it is evident that the Scripture doctrine of *mediation*, both in its more general bearing, and in the peculiar view of the propitiatory sufferings of Christ, although far above the scope of human invention, is consistent with reason and agrees with experience.

In order, however, that we may apprehend with greater precision the reasonableness of this doctrine, it is necessary for us to advert more particularly to two of its features.

1. Were a mediator required to act on behalf of some miserable criminal in order to rescue him from impending punishment, it would be a vast advantage if one could be found, who had a full understanding of the criminal’s case and abundant opportunity of sympathizing with his sufferings, and yet was a person of commanding influence—whose natural situation would enable him to deal on equal terms with the offended party, say with the supreme governor of the country. Should it be possible to obtain such a mediator, he would be selected by every person of reflection, in preference to any other who had either less knowledge of the criminal’s sufferings, or less authority in dealing with the sovereign. How matchless then is the wisdom and merey of that dispensation, under

² Eph. v, 25.

³ Heb. ix, 14.

⁴ John xv, 13; *comp.* Rom. v, 6—8.

which we are provided with a Mediator, who in his human character (though sinless) “was in all points tempted like as we are,” and is therefore “touched with a feeling of our infirmities;”⁵ and yet, being one with the Father in the Godhead, is one with him in dignity and power. “Father,” said Jesus, “I WILL that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am.”⁶ We are worms of the earth—finite, weak, degraded, and exposed to suffering; God is supreme and infinitely powerful and holy. Behold in Christ the all availing Mediator—the “Daysman betwixt us”—who “can lay his hand upon us both!”⁷

2. In contemplating the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God, we ought never to lose sight of its purpose, as declared by the apostle Paul—that God “might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”⁸ There is nothing in Scripture which in the least degree supports the notion that our heavenly Father is naturally implacable, and that his wrath was appeased by the sacrifice of an innocent victim. While the prevalence of bloody sacrifices among the heathen nations, in all ages of the world, plainly indicates the feeling that without an atonement there is no forgiveness of sin, and while it affords an evidence of some original revelation on the subject, the vulgar notion that a wrathful Deity is by this method *rendered placable*, receives no countenance from Christianity. In the Bible, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is represented as the means, appointed of the Father in perfect wisdom and love, whereby he might freely justify the

⁵ Heb. iv, 15.

⁶ John xvii, 24.

⁷ Job ix, 33.

⁸ Rom. iii, 26.

sinner, and at the same time preserve inviolate the holiness of his own character, and the claims of his moral law.

Ceremonial sacrifice, as it was instituted on divine authority, was a *display*, and, on the part of the offerer, an *acknowledgment* of the true desert of sin. It was an intelligible sign that the proper penalty of sin is death, and thus became an act of homage to the purity of the law and to the authority of God the law-giver. On precisely the same principle, the sacrifice of the incarnate Son of God was a public recognition of the most elevated and glorious kind, that sin is unalterably offensive in the sight of God. Nor is it possible to conceive an event by which this truth could have been so clearly manifested, or so efficaciously impressed on his rational creation.

At the same time it was an infinitely exalted example, and therefore proof, of the unmerited love and mercy of God towards a sinful world—an act of grace, which places the whole of our fallen race under unutterable obligations to our redeeming God and Saviour.

Now I conceive that this matchless display of holiness and love in indissoluble union, fully accords with our most enlightened notions of the divine attributes; that it agrees with all that we here know of the justice of God on the one hand, and of his mercy on the other; that, in the highest sense of the term, it is *reasonable*; and that, as such, it must for ever claim the admiration, and call forth the praises, of God's intelligent creation.

SECTION V.

ON THE FITNESS OF THE SCHEME OF REDEMPTION.

WHEN we speak of the fitness of the scheme of redemption, that is, of its suitability to its proposed ends, we must always recollect that the ultimate design of every dispensation of Providence, is the glory of God ; and it is clearly the highest point in the character of regenerate men, that they are taught of the Spirit to co-operate in this design.

Such persons will be prepared to acknowledge that in that manifestation of holiness and love conjointly, which distinguishes the scheme of redemption, there is a direct and perfect fitness to the end of God's glory. For we cannot conceive a method by which he could be more certainly glorified, than by so peculiar and so distinct a display of his attributes.

Nor can we doubt that this display is intended for the instruction, not merely of mankind but of other orders of beings, endued with a rational and moral nature. Reason suggests this doctrine as highly probable ; and Scripture declares that one intent of the Christian dispensation was, that "now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be

known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.”¹ On the same ground the doctrines of Christianity are described by the apostle Peter as “things which the angels desire to look into”²—expressions which evidently convey the idea that the glory of these things does not lie merely on the surface—that there is a depth in them, not easily inspected or fathomed, into which even the angels delight to inquire.

But the glory of God is insured through the Christian dispensation, not merely by a display of his moral attributes to the universe, but by the actual effects produced, through this dispensation, in the good and happiness of his creatures. That these effects are great and numerous, far beyond our powers of examination or conception, we may readily suppose; and that such is the fact the apostle plainly indicates, when he speaks of God’s good pleasure “which he hath purposed in himself; that, in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one ALL THINGS in Christ, both which are IN HEAVEN, and which are ON EARTH, even in him.”³

These remarks may serve to show the extreme futility of the objections advanced against Christianity on the ground that our world is too insignificant a part of the creation to be the object of redemption through the incarnation and sacrifice of God’s own Son. For although this globe was selected as the scene of the event, the purposes to which the dispensation is directed are probably co-extensive with the

¹ Eph. iii, 10. ἡ πολυποίκιλος σοφία τοῦ Θεοῦ.

² 1 Pet. i, 12.

³ Eph i, 9, 10.

universe itself; and to all these purposes it may be *peculiarly* and perfectly adapted.

Did we however suppose that the inhabitants of this world were the sole objects of this mysterious display of holiness and merey, the word *eternity* would remove every difficulty; for what purpose can be conceived more worthy of God, and of the infinite resources of his love, than the salvation of myriads of beings, of whose existence, as of his own, there will be no end? The globe which we inhabit may indeed be but a point in God's universe, and its countless inhabitants almost nothing among the hosts of his intelligent creatures; but who, that regards the analogy of nature, will object on that account to the scheme of Christianity? Does it not seem as if the complete power of Deity were expended on an insect, a feather, or a leaf? And is there not, in the smallest parts of the creation, as well as in the stupendous whole, a hidden infinite which no man can search?

It appears then, that, independently of all unknown purposes, extending as they may well be supposed to do far beyond the limits of our globe, the salvation of sinful man is in itself an end (subservient to God's glory) which fully justifies the grand peculiarities of the gospel. It remains for us therefore to shew that to this its professed end, the plan of redemption is exactly suited—that in it there is an adequate supply of all our spiritual need—that in Christ "*all fulness*" dwells for our restoration and salvation.

I. Man by nature is the child of ignorance. He may indeed put forth his powers of observation and reason, and obtain much knowledge on worldly and

physical subjects ; but respecting divine and spiritual things he is in utter darkness, surrounded by a shade too deep to be pierced by any beam of his own intelligence. It is true that God has endued him with a moral nature ; and that, in the midst of his ruin by the fall, he is visited with a ray of heavenly light independently of any outward revelation. There can be little doubt that this blessing, like all other spiritual good, is bestowed upon him through the medium of a crucified Redeemer. But, in considering the fitness of the scheme of redemption, we must look to its operation, where it is actually made known ; for the outward revelation of truth clearly forms a part of the scheme itself. Now it is in *revealed religion*, and there only, that blind and erring man receives an illumination exactly proportioned to the depth and completeness of his ignorance.

There he obtains sufficient information on the nature and attributes of God, on the demands of the law, and on his own character and condition, his moral responsibility, and future prospects. There he is taught the lesson of the immortality of the soul, of the resurrection of the body, and of judgment to come. There he is made acquainted with the Saviour through whom he is reconciled to God, and with the Spirit by whom he is converted and sanctified. Well might Jesus say (in his peculiar character of a Revealer of Truth,) "I am the light of the world. He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."⁴ Well might the apostle

⁴ John viii, 12 ; *comp.* Luke i, 77—79.

Peter call on the early Christian believers to “shew forth the praises of him” who had “called” them “out of darkness into his marvellous light.”⁵

But the adaptation of this part of the scheme of redemption to the need of man, is apparent, not only from the completeness of the light bestowed, but from the limits by which it is bounded. While the gospel makes known to us every thing which we can conceive to be required for the purpose of influencing our hearts and directing our practice, it never goes out of its way, as false systems of religion do, to indulge our curiosity, or to please the speculative mind. Momentous facts are revealed to us which bear with irresistible force on our affections, and therefore on our practice; but the mode of these facts—a matter with which we have no concern—is hidden from our view. It is the unchanging principle of divine revelation, that “the secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may *do* all the words of this law.”⁶

II. But it is not enough for blind and erring man, that a clear revelation is made to him, of the “truth as it is in Jesus.” His ignorance of the things of God is moral as well as intellectual, and his mental vision must be purified before he can entertain a just view of himself, his God, and his Redeemer. Experience affords abundant proofs of the truth of the principle so clearly laid down by the apostle Paul—“The natural man receiveth not the things of the

⁵ 1 Pet. ii, 9.

⁶ Deut. xxix, 29.

Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”⁷

The undeniable fact is, that we are by nature not only ignorant, but alienated from God—barren, hard, unprofitable, corrupt. No man, therefore, can be a partaker in any of the spiritual and saving blessings of the gospel, without *regeneration*. In the scheme of redemption, this is an article of primary importance; because upon it all the remaining provisions of that scheme (as it regards ourselves) entirely depend. The spiritual like the natural life must have its beginning, and regeneration is just as necessary to the former, as birth is to the latter. “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God!”⁸

That this new birth—this vital change in the spirit of a man—cannot be produced by any strength or wisdom of our own, is a truth declared in Scripture, and one which the most extensive observation will never fail to confirm. Regeneration is the work of omnipotence, and, in the economy of grace, it is specially ascribed to the Holy Spirit. Every true convert is “born of God”⁹—“born of THE SPIRIT.”¹

The influence by which this change is effected is compared by our Saviour to the wind which “bloweth where it listeth.” We must not therefore, pretend to define the time, the circumstances, or the methods, which God may be pleased to bless to this mighty end. Nevertheless, the instrument which, according to the experience of believers, is usually employed for

⁷ 1 Cor. ii, 14.

⁸ John iii, 3.

⁹ John i, 13.

¹ John iii, 5.

the purpose, *is the gospel of our Redeemer*. Christians are “born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible (that is of the Spirit)—by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” “And this is the word,” adds the apostle, “which *by the gospel* is preached unto you.”² “Of his own will, begat he us *with the word of truth*.”³

The Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son, takes of the doctrine of Christ, and reveals it to our souls. By renewing us in “the spirit of our mind,” he rectifies our depraved intellectual faculties, and enables us to comprehend and imbibe the gospel; again, through the medium of the understanding, he impresses its contents on the heart. Thus he imparts to us a new life, humbles us under a sense of sin, and *turns* us to our Saviour and our God.

III. Man by nature is the child of wrath, labouring under the curse of the law—the awful sentence of eternal death. What then can be conceived more adapted to his need than *justification*—a plenary remission of all his sins through the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and a free acceptance of him as righteous, for the sake of a righteous Saviour?

Here he finds reconciliation with a God of justice, deliverance from condemnation and eternal punishment, and a well founded hope of immortal bliss. The utmost claims of the law are satisfied; the holiness of the Creator is more than ever manifested; and the broken-hearted sinner reposes in peace on the bosom of infinite mercy. In himself indeed, as a

² 1 Pet. i, 23, 25.

³ James i, 18.

transgressor from his birth, he is vile and polluted; but, by the blood of Jesus sprinkled on his heart, his conscience is purged from every dead work; and, having obtained an interest in the Saviour of men, he wears a robe of righteousness in which there is no spot. God accepts him in the Beloved; and adopts him as a child of grace, and as an heir of glory.

Such is the view presented to us in the Scriptures of the justification of the sinner, and nothing short of faith in this free gift of mercy can impart to the awakened mind substantial peace either in living or in dying. To advert more particularly to peace in death—how tremendous must it be, to meet the king of terrors, and to plunge into the fathomless abyss of eternity, without a Saviour!

Many who have despised Christianity and rejected its warnings during the day of their probation, have found the near approach of death unspeakably terrible. Yet the philosophical unbeliever is sometimes known to put off mortality with cold sedateness, and the wicked have often "*no bands* in their death;" they meet their "last end" like the beasts that perish.

The *false rest* of the philosopher, in such a case, may be traced to the hardness of unbelief; while that of the wicked is the obvious consequence of a seared conscience. But let a man be convinced of the holiness of God, of his own sinfulness and corruption, and of the infinite terribleness of the curse of the law—let him view his condition and danger as they really are—and he will enjoy no tranquillity in death; except from a reliance on the infinite mercy of God through the atoning blood of a Saviour. Here there is peace for

the dying penitent, and here his peace is perfect. The exact suitability of the provision offered to us in the gospel, for the sinner's last and utmost need, affords us an ample evidence that it is the boon of heaven.

In order to apprehend this suitability, however, we must fix our regards in an especial manner on the dignity of the Mediator—on the glory and fulness of his deity. For the mighty purpose of deliverance from guilt and sin, the believer, who knows the depth of his own corruption in the fall, can place no confidence in any mere man, or even in the most exalted and powerful of created beings. No sacrifice can supply his need, for the blotting out of sin, but one of infinite worth. No mediator will suffice for the repose of his troubled spirit, but such an one as is proposed to him in the gospel—a Mediator who was not only man to *die*, but God to *save*—omnipotent to bear the burthen of his iniquities, to deliver him from the power of Satan, and to quicken him from his moral death unto life eternal.

It is this grand distinguishing feature of the gospel, which above all others adapts it to the depth and extent of our ruin, and which in the same degree establishes the truth and divine origin of the Christian system.

IV. But peace in death is not the only blessing of which the sinner stands in need. He wants to be supplied with motives, which will inevitably lead him to a *life* of righteousness; for, while an abundant provision is made in the gospel for the pardon of the penitent transgressor, it remains to be true that “without holiness no man can see the Lord.”

Now were justification proposed to him on such terms as would leave him without a due sense of the enormity of sin, this end would not be answered ; because his feeling of the necessity of forsaking sin, would be slight in proportion to his estimate of the evil itself. Did we, for example, suppose that forgiveness was offered to us as the mere reward of repentance, and of such poor repentance as human reason could effect, the low views of sin which such a notion would engender, would never afford a sufficient motive for a radical change of conduct. When we consider the deceitfulness of the heart of man, may we not rest assured, that the practical inference would be, “we will continue in sin, that grace may abound?”

But how different is the operation of that scheme of redemption, in which the free pardon of the penitent sinner is bestowed on the sole ground of the atoning sacrifice of the Saviour ! The portentous fact of the incarnation of Jesus Christ, and of his propitiatory death on the cross, cannot fail to produce, in the mind of the believer, a settled conviction of the danger and malignity of sin. And here again, the deity of Jesus is proved to be the spring and centre of the system. Could the death of a mere man like ourselves have atoned for the sins of the world, sin must needs be an evil of small importance. Were the work to be effected by some angel or archangel, that evil might indeed assume a somewhat more imposing form, but could scarcely be regarded as desperate—the sure parent of everlasting woe. But behold the Son of God, who is one with the Father in infinite power and glory, descends from his throne of majesty,

becomes a man, and bears upon HIMSELF the penalty of our transgressions. How deadly, in the view of every enlightened believer, must be that evil, for the remedy of which God has seen fit to provide by so astonishing a sacrifice!

The light which is thus reflected from the cross of Jesus on the danger and desert of sin, connected as it is with an express revelation of the purity of God, and of the future punishment of transgressors, has a powerful tendency to excite in the Christian a dread of sinning, and an awful fear of that holy Being to whom sin is infinitely offensive. Nor can we easily overrate the importance of this fear, as a restraining principle, as an unceasing motive to circumspection and self-denial. Truly may it be said, that "the fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death."⁴

But a believing view of Christ crucified, is the most effective means not only of inspiring a dread of sin, but of adding poignancy and depth to the penitence of the sinner. "I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications, and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born."⁵

Every one must perceive that such an effect is of the highest importance for the purpose of reformation. The fear of God to which we are introduced by a knowledge of Christ crucified, is indeed no slavish

⁴ Prov. xiv, 27.

⁵ Zech. xii, 10.

principle; for with it there never fails to spring up another motive to obedience, of a still more delightful and influential character. That motive is love. God, in the scheme of redemption, lays a sovereign hold on our affections; and, while he presents himself to us as a Being perfectly holy, and therefore perfectly lovely—by the free gift of his *only begotten Son*, he brings our love into action, commands our gratitude, and binds us by the dearest and strongest of ties to a life of piety and virtue.

This is the third point in relation to which the fitness of a divine Saviour to our need is admirably manifested. Precisely in proportion as we exalt the gift, we exalt also the demand on our gratitude. It is the infinite dignity of our Redeemer, and the corresponding preciousness of his atoning blood—it is the doctrine of “God manifest in the flesh”—which bears with a resistless force on the best feelings of the human heart, and by “the expulsive power of a new affection” delivers us from the love of this present world. The love of Christ is a constraining principle. It leads to decision, to devotedness, and to perseverance. It is a hidden spring in the machinery of man’s heart, of such a nature, as to maintain through every diversity of heights and depths, an even energy; and to occasion “a perpetual motion” in the service of God, and in the pursuit of his glory.

V. When we speak of the tendency of a particular doctrine to excite in our minds right motives of action, we do not forget that the affections of the natural man are utterly corrupt and inapplicable, without grace, to any holy purpose. But God has provided

us with an influence, under which they resume their right character and direction, and therefore become effective for the purest and most exalted ends.

The influence of the Holy Spirit, through which we are in the first instance converted to God, is afterwards “shed abundantly”⁶ on the believer through faith in Christ crucified. It is perpetually at work in cleansing his thoughts and motives, in regulating his conduct, and in changing the whole current of his feelings and desires. In an especial manner the Spirit operates on the conscience—rectifying and refining the moral sense, exalting the standard of virtue, and guiding the watchful and obedient soul into all that is pure, lovely, just, and true. “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.”⁷ “The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.”⁸ “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”⁹

As the believer, with a patient and willing mind, follows this heavenly guide, that new creation gradually takes place in him, by which his once polluted soul is made meet for the purity of heaven, for the society of angels, and even for the presence of God himself. He puts off “concerning the former conversation, the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,” and puts on “the new man which

⁶ John vii, 38; Tit. iii, 6.

⁷ John xvi, 13.

⁸ 1 John ii, 27.

⁹ Rom. viii, 14.

after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”¹ Weak and unworthy as he is, he has renounced the world, the flesh, and the devil. Now he “sows to the Spirit,” and brings forth its “fruit,” which is “love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance.”² “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.”³

Such is the work of sanctification, the second main constituent of the scheme of redemption. That this work, made known to us as it is only by Christianity, is adapted to the spiritual need of the sinner, admits of no question. And equally obvious is it that the nice precision with which it suits its purpose, affords a practical demonstration that it is God’s institution, and not man’s invention.

Here it may be remarked, that the Spirit of God bestowed on believers in Jesus, is the earnest of their inheritance, the pledge of their future happiness. Hence it is the means of exciting and strengthening in their minds another motive to action, of high importance to their spiritual progress. That motive is *hope*.

The hopes of the Christian are founded on the promises of God—and these, in the gospel, are twofold—the promise of grace for the present life, and that of glory for the life to come. When, therefore, we have experienced the fulfilment of the first of these promises, our reliance on the second is confirmed and

¹ Eph. iv, 22—24.

² Gal. v, 22, 23.

³ 2 Cor. v, 17.

established. And what is the consequence? A "good hope through grace" animates our exertions, and cheers us onwards "in the race which is set before us." The Christian, who has drunk at no stagnant well, but at the fountain of living water, is for ever aspiring after his final victory. "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth after those things which are before," he presses "towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

VI. Yet the work of sanctification is very gradual. The believer is engaged in an arduous warfare; and the conflict between the carnal and spiritual mind, is often one of long duration, and subject to many vicissitudes. Although he has imbibed a hatred of sin, and is actuated by the fear and love of God and by the hope of glory, yet his natural corruption is far from being speedily annihilated. Sin, in its more hidden and insinuating forms, is often mixed up with his thoughts and imaginations, and even with his words and actions; and although he is no longer under its dominion, he soon discovers that a complete victory over it can be obtained, only at the cost of many painful struggles. While he is exposed like other men to temporal afflictions, the plague of his own heart is to him a source of sorrow and distress, of which the unregenerate world knows nothing. Above all, Satan is his tempter and tormentor—a perpetual, and sometimes, alas! a successful enemy.

But what a blessed provision is made for him in the scheme of redemption! In the first place, a free access is opened through the blood of Jesus, to a throne of infinite mercy. Hither it is his daily and

hourly privilege to resort, that he may hold communion with God; and while he wrestles with the Holy One of Israel for a blessing, the Spirit helps his infirmities, adds grace to his supplications, and as it were prays in his stead, “with groanings which cannot be uttered.”⁴

And, in the second place, if he sins, he has “an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous”—an High Priest at the right hand of the Majesty on High, who not only died to reconcile us to God, but ever lives to make intercession for us. This risen and glorified Mediator is, indeed, with wondrous exactness, suited to our need. On the one hand he is touched as a brother with a feeling of our infirmities; on the other hand he rules supreme, for the help and deliverance of his servants, over all the powers of darkness. He is at once our pitying friend, and our invincible captain.

As other parts of the scheme of redemption are calculated to bring into exercise the motives of fear, gratitude, and hope, so these consoling features of it, have a peculiarly powerful tendency to imbue us with a fourth principle of immense practical importance—I mean, *trust in God*. Those who are accustomed, under the influence of the Spirit, to draw near, through an interceding Mediator, to the Fountain of life, are attracted by an ever-present dispensation of mercy to stay themselves upon God. They are taught by delightful experience, to place a firm reliance on the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; they live by faith in an unseen yet all-sufficient Saviour. And

⁴ Rom. viii, 26.

what is the practical consequence? While they lean on the arm of omnipotence, they gradually attain to that *stability* both of sentiment and practice, which the speculations of men, and the storms of life, can never shake.

VII. Man in the fall is not only vicious, but miserable. He stands in need of happiness; and Christianity bestows upon him, even here, just so much of that heavenly boon, as suits his real condition.

The general tendency of Christianity to promote the happiness of mankind, is manifested by a comparison of the state of the ancient heathen world, with that of Christendom.

The comforts of the hospital, the mitigations of the method of war, the place assigned in the scale of society to females, the sacred character of the marriage tie, and the numerous efforts made in Christian countries for the relief of the indigent, are so many proofs of the *general tendency* of Christianity to promote the happiness of mankind. These effects are produced even where our religion is by no means fully influential. Were its principles more deeply imbibed, and were they universal, the whole world would be a scene of peace, order, and love.

But to consider the subject as it regards individual experience. Let a man heartily embrace the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, and give himself up to its regenerating influence; and not only will he become a centre of good and comfort to all around him, but there will be opened to himself resources of happiness, to which he was before an utter stranger. Now will he, as a reconciled and adopted child of God,

delight in communion with his Creator, and derive from daily obedience to the Saviour, a perpetual pleasure. A sacred charm will be cast over the enjoyments of life, and even its afflictions will be welcomed as tokens of a Father's love. Now will he be cheered, through every vicissitude, with the glad hope of immortality; and the "love of God, shed abroad" in his heart, will at times impart that flow of mental peace, which may well be regarded as a foretaste of heaven.

While however such happiness in the present life is the consequence of a hearty reception of the gospel, it is a circumstance which strongly confirms our argument, that Christianity does not, like religious systems of human invention, offer us happiness on false terms. In the first place, it utterly rejects all self-imposed mortifications as the means of purchasing it; and secondly, while it sanctions the innocent pleasures of life, it requires the surrender of the whole heart, and wounds in order to heal. A man must be smitten with sorrow under the sense of his transgressions: he must sacrifice the pride of his heart at the foot of the cross of Christ; he must take up his own cross and follow Jesus—before he can be made a partaker of the happiness of religion—"of the peace of God which passeth all understanding."

Neither does Christianity flatter even her obedient children with promises of a painless life. Rather does she teach them to expect tribulation; and to glory in their conformity with the sufferings of Christ. The Christian whose eye is opened to behold his own cor-

ruption, and the depravity and wretchedness of mankind, has sorrows as well as joys, which are peculiar to himself; nor would he dare to accept immunity from suffering, on the condition of having his vision blinded. He sees this sinful and sorrowful world as it really is; and for *unclouded* happiness, his regards are fixed exclusively on the world to come.

VIII. Finally, sinful man is mortal; he stands in need of immortality. He is exposed to endless suffering; he stands in need of eternal joy. These blessings are abundantly bestowed upon him through the peculiar efficacy of the scheme of redemption.

We have already remarked that while Christianity confirms the presumptions of reason, that the soul survives the body, it reveals the additional doctrine, that in the last day all men will be raised from death—the just to happiness, the unjust to shame and misery. As it relates to the faithful followers of Christ, the resurrection of the body clearly forms a part of the scheme of redemption. It is represented in Scripture as the last step to the fulness of their happiness, and as a blessing bestowed upon them, through the mediation of that Redeemer, who has himself triumphed over death—whose resurrection is the pledge of theirs.

The suitability of Christianity to the need of sinful man, is *completed* by its provision for the conquest and extermination of death. When Christ shall have changed “our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body;”⁵ and when he shall have made manifest to the universe, on the last day of

⁵ Phil. iii, 21.

account, our free and perfect justification—then will our salvation be finished, and our utmost need for ever supplied. Through “the blood of the everlasting covenant,” our portion will be bliss, unutterable and eternal.

Such is the glorious consummation which Christianity proposes to the faith and hope of her children. But, in conclusion, let us mark the unrivalled wisdom, the nice propriety,—all her own—with which she unfolds to them the glories of their future state. The heaven revealed to us in the Scriptures is, in the first place, no spiritual non-entity, such as a vain philosophy has sometimes imagined—a mere condition of mind, independent of place or circumstance; but a sober reality—a better country—a region of infinite delights. And, secondly, on the other hand, it is not, like Mahomet’s paradise, the inheritance of flesh and blood, or the scene of any carnal pleasure, but *there* all is spiritual, and all is pure.

The language of the sacred writers on the subject, although abounding in expressive and affecting images, is indeed distinguished from that of all false prophets, by an absence of details, and by a decent and solemn reserve. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”⁶ Yet God has made known to us enough of these things to enlighten the understanding, and to satisfy the heart. In the Scriptures we are assured, that rest from labour and sorrow, a total cessation from sin, a perfect fellowship and harmony, the immediate presence of Christ, the ever-flowing influences of the

⁶ 1 Cor. ii, 9; *comp.* Isa. lxiv, 4.

Spirit, the service and praise of God—will constitute the joy of saints—the eternal pleasures of heaven.

Above all, it is the noble distinction of the scheme of redemption, that, under its gracious provisions, happiness goes hand in hand with holiness—that the latter is absolutely indispensable to the former—and that they will know no separation through all eternity.

It appears then

First—That the primary purpose of Christianity, as of every other divine dispensation, is the glory of God—a purpose fully answered by that peculiar display of his attributes which distinguishes the scheme of redemption, and also by the good effects which that scheme produces on his creatures.

Secondly—That, in subservience to the glory of God, the purposes of this dispensation may probably be vast and numerous, far beyond our conception; that Scripture describes it as an object of contemplation to beings superior to man, and mentions its consequences as co-extensive with the universe.

Thirdly—That the scheme of redemption is adapted with wonderful precision to the spiritual need of *mankind*; as appears from the following considerations :

Through this plan of merey, man, in his darkness, is illuminated; yet only in such a manner and degree, as are suited to his condition.

Incapable by nature of apprehending the things of God, and dead to holiness, he is born again of the Spirit.

Guilty and condemned by the law, he is freely forgiven and justified; yet only on a principle which

impresses him with a dread of sin, and an awful fear of God; and while this fear inculcates circumspection, the love, which the same plan engenders, constrains obedience, zeal, and perseverance.

Sinful and weak in himself, he is guided, assisted, and sanctified by the influence of the Spirit of God; yet so that the experience of grace, confirming the hope of glory, animates his own efforts in the race of virtue.

Engaged in an arduous warfare against sin and Satan, he reposes on the mediation of a glorified Saviour, and thus imbibes that trust in God, which insures his stability in the truth.

In his natural misery, he is supplied even here with the boon of happiness; yet only so far as it is safe for him to be happy.

In the midst of death he rejoices in the prospect of *complete* immortality.

And finally, instead of his merited reward of endless woe, a heaven is set before him, at once substantial and spiritual; at once infinitely joyous and perfectly pure.

It is well observed, in Ecclesiasticus, that, "all things are double one against another," and that God "bath made nothing imperfect."⁷ The force of this remark must be obvious to every one who looks abroad into the field of nature. The eye is made for the light and the light for the eye; the soil of the earth for its vegetable productions, and vegetables for the soil on which they grow; the fish for the waters, and

⁷ Eccclus. xliii, 24.

the waters for the fish. All nature is filled with pairs of things, which have no tendency to produce each other, yet are fitted together with a perfect exactness. Who ever dreams that the lungs of a man produce the air he breathes, or the air the lungs which breathe it? Yet the structure of the lungs is exactly such as enables us to inhale a gaseous fluid; and the air is just of the consistency which suits it to this structure. What anatomist is not aware, that the blood is so conducted through the lungs, as there to imbibe from the atmosphere its vivifying principle? What chemist does not know that the atmosphere is precisely so composed, as to serve this purpose; that if either oxygen or azote was omitted, life would be destroyed—that even if they were mingled in different proportions, both air and lungs would immediately become useless?

Now in the moral and spiritual world, correspondences of a similar kind are easily perceptible. The light is not more suited to the eye, or the soil of the earth to the vegetable, or the water to the frame work of the fish, or the air to the lungs which inhale it, than is each particular of the scheme of redemption to that part of our mental system, with which it corresponds. And considered as a whole, revealed religion answers its end in supplying our spiritual wants, just as completely as nature serves her purpose, in providing for our present life, and in satisfying the demands of the body.

No fair reasoner, therefore, who is accustomed to trace the contrivances of this visible world to an all-wise Contriver, can refuse to allow that Christianity,

like nature, is the work and ordinance of Him who pairs, adapts, and balances all things according to their need. If the production of material things, which “perish with the using,” displays (as it unquestionably does) the wisdom and power of God—how much more that *new* creation, which acts on the hidden springs of man’s heart, opens the blind understanding, imparts the spiritual life, applies every motive to its proper function, redeems and purifies the guilty soul, and converts the very child of hell, into an heir of glory!⁸

The general argument which has now been stated, is confirmed and elucidated by some particular reflections.

In the *first* place, the great system of truth unfolded to us in the Bible, although admirably compacted, is in its nature complex. It is composed of many parts, and these are distinguished, one from another, by different, and sometimes even by opposite characters. On the one hand are revealed to us the terrors of the Lord—on the other hand, his spontaneous mercies; on the one hand, election and sovereign grace—on the other, the unfettered and responsible agency of man. Above all, while the doctrine of justification declares the pardoning love of God towards a guilty world, that of sanctification proclaims, with a

⁸ Vide Grotii Com. in Eph. iii, 9. “Omnia Christus fecit nova; et *divinior* hæc creatio quam prior illa.”

voice equally strong and clear, the indispensable necessity of personal holiness.

But while these various parts of the system are distinct from each other, and may never be confounded, and while the mode in which they consist is in some instances concealed from our view, they are inseparably joined; and being arranged with a perfect precision, they unite in producing a single effect. That effect is the moral renovation of fallen man.

Now, as the wisdom and power of God are often displayed in the multiplicity of ends which a single means answers, so they are no less illustriously manifested by the combined application of diversified means, and even of opposite principles, to the production of one broad, simple, and glorious result. This is one of the characteristics by which the counsels of the Supreme Being are pre-eminently distinguished—by which “he turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish.”⁹ Nor is it beside our mark to observe, that when Christianity fails to produce its full and genial effect in sincere believers, this circumstance mostly arises from their taking too limited a view of a system, of which the very nature is to comprehend, in one vast machinery, whatsoever can affect the heart of man, and form the character of the servant of God.

This remark naturally leads us to our *second* point—namely, that Christianity is neither deficient nor redundant; it equally rejects augmentation and diminution. The history of the professing church of Christ, now continued through more than eighteen

⁹ Isa. xliv, 25.

centuries, affords many humbling proofs, that the moment we add any thing to the religion of the New Testament, or take any thing away from it, that moment we injure its structure and weaken its effect. The doctrines of revealed religion came forth from the hands of their Author and his immediate followers, in a state of perfection, and the concentrated wisdom of ten thousand philosophers and theologians can change them, only for the worse.

The man who has a just apprehension of his own spiritual need, and of the fulness which is in Christ, will readily acknowledge that the scheme of the gospel is exactly suited to its purpose. But he will go further. He will confess that in whatsoever flights he may indulge his imagination, to whatsoever extent he may employ his speculative powers—it is utterly impossible for him to conceive any other scheme, or a scheme in any respect different, which would be equally adapted to the salvation of sinners. Well might the apostle Paul exclaim, “Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed! ”

As it is impossible for us to devise any new plan for the salvation of sinners, which would bear the least comparison with that of the gospel, so in the *third* place, the scheme of redemption revealed to us in Scripture, is itself distinguished by many peculiar features, which no man, in his own wisdom, could either have invented or imagined. The infinite mercy of God, the fall and corruption of man, the influ-

¹ Gal. i, 8.

ence of the Holy Ghost, and the spiritual glories of a future state, are all of them points which lie deeply hidden from the natural man, and to which there is no probability that his thoughts would ever have been directed. But our observation applies with still greater force to the incarnation and sacrifice of the only-begotten Son of God—a doctrine not only original and absolutely singular, but far beyond the boundaries of man's conception. Yet this is the turning point of the whole system, on which its restoring and saving efficacy mainly depends. Under the love of God the Father, it is the moving cause of our salvation—the very spring of our hopes, our reformation, and our happiness.

Fourthly.—Although extrinsic causes have hitherto prevented the universal diffusion of Christianity, our religion itself has no exclusive tendencies; “in its scope, purpose, and practical operation, it is entirely and equally adapted to the whole human race.”²

All men are guilty—all condemned by the law—all diseased with sin—all under the yoke of Satan. To all alike therefore is that religion suited, which provides for our pardon, our deliverance, and our cure. But another reason of the universal applicability of the scheme of redemption, is the simplicity of the terms on which it is offered to our acceptance—“BELIEVE and LIVE.” God gave his only-begotten Son, that “whosoever believeth in him might have everlasting life.”³ “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.”⁴ “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.”⁵

² Essays on Christianity, No. iv.

³ John iii, 16.

⁴ John iii, 36.

⁵ Acts xvi, 31.

That it is the duty of every man, as far as lies in his power, to examine the evidences of Christianity, and to mark and number the pillars which support the fabric of our faith, and that such a practice is of eminent use, both for the conviction of unbelievers, and for the confirmation of Christians, is a truth which cannot be questioned. Nevertheless a practical belief of the gospel is usually found to rest on a far more simple ground. The Saviour is proposed to the sinner; and the sinner, when made sensible of his actual condition, will no more reject the Saviour, than a drowning man will refuse to lay hold on the arm which would draw him to the shore, and which is his only means of safety.

He who has just views of the holiness of God and of his own sinfulness, and feels the depth of his need by nature, will imbibe the gospel as simply and eagerly as the new-born babe its natural food; and just in proportion as his heart and conduct are influenced, will his understanding be opened to perceive the perfect fitness, and therefore the unquestionable truth, of the scheme of redemption.

When we reflect on the sublimity of the principal doctrines of the Bible, we might be tempted to suppose that none but the most intellectual of men would be capable of embracing them. But Christianity, in its application to the understanding as well as to the heart, is evenly adapted to all men; embracing in its comprehensive grasp of charity, the most simple and the most cultivated of our species. While, as it regards their mode and nature, her mysteries are far beyond the comprehension of any man—in their

practical bearing, in their suitability to our need, in their saving efficacy, they are just as intelligible to the Indian convert, or to the illiterate peasant, as they are to the most profound and enlightened of philosophers.

Now I conceive that nothing can more clearly evince the wisdom as well as goodness of its Author, than this distinguishing provision. Were a vast and complex machine to be formed for some important temporal purpose universally interesting to men, although it might be put together on scientific principles, and display a matchless variety and combination of forces, foul would be the blot on the wisdom of its contriver, should much of art or science be required in applying it to its use. But when such a machine may be brought to bear upon its purpose, with undeviating success, by means of a simple handle which a child may turn, then indeed are we fully satisfied that its maker understood his calling—then have we a perfect specimen of human ingenuity.

To conclude—one of two alternatives is inevitable. Either the religion of the Bible comes from God, and is therefore unquestionably and perfectly true; or else this glorious system, so diversified in its parts, yet so simple in its operation, susceptible of no improvement even from the wisest of men, distinguished by features far beyond the reach of human conception, and yet fitted to the humblest as well as to the highest capacities, universally and perfectly adapted to the spiritual need of all men—is *a forgery*.

A forgery invented by whom? Not by persons of

profound reasoning powers, belonging to some highly cultivated society, and skilled in all philosophy and learning; but of a few obscure, illiterate Jewish fishermen!

Now it is surely no exaggeration to assert, that he who believes this latter alternative, has adopted the most preposterous of superstitions. Notwithstanding his pride of intellect and all his boasted show of reason, the infidel must take his place among the most credulous and irrational of mankind.

CONCLUSION.

To convince the cold, deliberate unbeliever, who has made up his mind to prefer a fathomless chaos to the beauty and order of revealed religion, I can scarcely venture to hope. In pity for the soul of such a man, I would pray God to put forth that pre-eminent work of grace, by which alone can be reclaimed the reckless speculator who tramples on the Son of God, despises the blood of his covenant, and contemns and derides the work of the Holy Spirit.

That many persons are to be met with in the present day who have been betrayed by a *little* knowledge¹ into this depth of error, is a melancholy fact. May they be brought to repentance before that awful period arrives when they shall hear a voice saying—The day of your salvation is past for ever: “He which is filthy, let him be filthy still.”²

¹ “It is an assured truth, and a conclusion of experience, that a little or superficial knowledge of philosophy may incline the mind of man to atheism, but a *farther proceeding* therein doth bring the mind back again to religion.”—*Lord Bacon’s Advancement of Learning*, p. 10.

² Rev. xxii, 11.

But there is a much more numerous class of persons, who are not altogether insensible of the excellence of Christianity, but are, nevertheless, prone to unbelief; and while they resist the invitations of divine mercy, shelter themselves under the pretext that *no man is responsible for his creed*. To such I would address myself, and beseech them to reflect, that while they are hesitating on the verge of Christianity, and weighing with nice scruples whether they will accept it or not, time is rapidly carrying them onwards to the judgment seat of their Creator. Except they turn to the Lord during their short remaining period of probation, they will there discover, when it shall be all too late, that this unreasonable pretext will fail to afford them a moment's protection from the fatal consequences of *sin*.

Their case is not to be confounded with that of the uninstructed heathen, who have never heard the truth. To these the gospel has been preached; it is written in the book of God for their instruction; and if they reject it they do so at their peril.

On this subject the Scriptures themselves supply us with a clear illustration. The Israelites, for their murmuring against God, are punished with fiery serpents under the influence of whose poisonous bite they lie dying in the wilderness. Moses, by the command of his Almighty leader, lifts up a brazen serpent on a pole, and proclaims the promise of Jehovah "that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it shall live."³ To look upon the serpent in reliance

³ Numb. xxi 4—9; *comp.* John iii, 14, 15.

on the promise of God, and in obedience to his command, is an act of faith ; and as many of the people as perform this act are healed of their wounds.

But we can easily suppose the case of an unbelieving Israelite, who should aver that this wound was by no means mortal ; and even supposing it to be so, that it could not, in the nature of things, be affected by his looking on a serpent of brass—that such a mode of healing was unintelligible, and therefore incredible. The result is obvious. He turns his head away from an object which is a mere offence to him ; the poison performs its office without interruption, and, in a few short moments, he is numbered with the dead.

Now we are all wounded by the devil—the serpent who deceived our first parents, and the natural, necessary, consequence of sin—the poison which he has injected—is the death of the soul. God beholds us in our desperate condition, and in his infinite compassion provides us with a remedy. The Son of man is lifted up on the cross, and the proclamation goes forth on divine authority to a world of sinners—*Believe and live*. The Christian obeys, and is healed ; but what says the unbeliever ? “ Your gospel to me is foolishness ; for in the first place, I am not, as you uncharitably pretend, *a sinner* ; and secondly, if I were so, what possible connection can there be, between the crucifixion of Jesus, and the forgiveness of *my* transgressions ? Such a system does not accord with my notions, either of wisdom or rectitude, and I cannot be responsible for not believing a doctrine which it is impossible for me to understand.” Thus, in the pride and folly of his heart, he rejects the appointed remedy

—the only possible means of his recovery. And what is the consequence? Sin and Satan work their own way without impediment. He dies, and dies for ever.

To walk by faith and not by sight, is in various respects, the lot of humanity—a provision wrought into the whole constitution and order of providence—the rule by which we act, in a countless multitude of the occasions and exigences of life. Since then we know it to be an appointment of every day's experience, it is absurd to object to it in matters of religion. In spite of all our cavils, that great principle of godliness remains unaltered and unalterable—"The just shall live by FAITH."

But not only has God graciously proposed his truth to us. He has accompanied the revelation of it with indubitable vouchers of its divine origin. What sceptic will dare to pretend that he is not *morally* responsible for an examination of these vouchers? Christianity is fraught with tidings of such unutterable importance, and is distinguished, even at first sight, by such broad marks of truth, that a doubter is bound by the most obvious moral principles, to investigate the grounds on which it claims our credence.

Bishop Butler has justly remarked, that "the same character, the same inward principle which, after a man is convinced of the truth of religion, renders him obedient to the precepts of it, would, were he not thus convinced, set him about an examination of it;" and that "inattention, negligence, want of all serious concern about a matter of such a nature, and such importance, when offered to men's consideration is, before a distinct conviction of its truth, *as real*

*immoral depravity and dissoluteness, as neglect of religious practice after such conviction."*⁴ Disobedience to the law in the one case, and neglect of evidence in the other, equally constitute punishable guilt.

But we are morally responsible, not only for examining the evidences of Christianity, but also for conducting our inquiry in a right spirit—with calmness and impartiality, with zeal and industry, and above all, with deep dependence on God and earnest prayer. The pride of our hearts must be abased, and truth, however humbling, must be permitted to exercise its genuine influence over our minds. If our prejudice or vanity obstructs its progress, we are condemned as transgressors and must abide by the consequence.

But a man may plead inability to pursue an enlarged inquiry into this all important subject. Then let him confine his attention to the Scriptures themselves; for the internal marks of their divine origin cannot be mistaken; they are numerous, palpable, overpowering. Let him give himself up to the *practical* efficacy of the principles unfolded in Scripture; and the comparison of his own experience with the contents of that sacred volume, will soon furnish him with irresistible evidence that it is the book of God.

A class of persons is indeed sometimes to be met with, who are at once desirous to believe the truths of Christianity, and prone to doubt them. While such persons are objects of sincere sympathy, they ought nevertheless to be clearly informed, that to continue

⁴ See Butler's Analogy, Part II, Chap. vi.

in such a condition of mind, is extremely dangerous ; and if a cure for it be at hand, and yet be neglected, they are morally guilty in the sight of God. Now such a cure may unquestionably be found in the patient, daily, investigation of Scripture, with supplication and prayer. Christ unfolds himself to us in the Scriptures ; and at the same time, he knocks at the door of our hearts by his Spirit. If we open the door and receive the heavenly guest, he will soon display his beauty and glory to our mental vision. We shall behold him in his divine majesty, in his boundless power, in his matchless condescension, in his perfect fitness to all our need, and we shall no longer be able to doubt, that he is God, our SAVIOUR.

It is never to be forgotten, that the guilt of unbelief is infinitely heightened, by the worth and dignity of Him, who is proposed to us in the gospel as the object of our faith. “He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the ONLY BEGOTTEN SON OF GOD.”⁵ To reject so glorious a Redeemer, because of that garb of humiliation, which he has assumed in pity to ourselves—to meet him at his coming, with cold, contemptuous, infidelity, or even with unworthy doubts and scruples—is folly and ingratitude indeed !

Here I would venture to warn the younger class of my readers, against the insinuating nature and *progressive* influence of unbelief ; and to beseech them, as they value their immortal souls, to guard with jealous care against its *first arising*.

⁵ John iii, 18.

Unbelief is frequently occasioned in the first instance, by our not marking with sufficient precision, the boundary line between *reason* and *faith*, in matters of religion. When we prove from abundant testimony, and from the effects which they have produced in the world, the reality of the Christian miracles; when we show that these miracles being real, afford indubitable evidence that Christianity comes from God; when we plead the ever germinant fulfilment of prophecy;⁶ and when, to complete our argument, we display the holiness and fitness of the whole scheme of revealed religion,—we make our appeal to the *reason* of those to whom we address ourselves; and our only request is, that in humble dependence on the Supreme Author of reason, they will bring this noble faculty into *full* and *diligent* exercise. We are quite sure that if they examine the subject with sufficient care and comprehensiveness, they cannot fail to be convinced by evidences, which may be made clear even to the uninstructed mind; but which nevertheless have satisfied the profound understandings of Bacon, Locke, Boyle, and Newton.

And secondly, when we open the volume of Scripture, and propose that interpretation of its contents—especially of its more mysterious parts—which is demanded by the plain laws of criticism—laws which

6 “Allowing nevertheless that latitude which is agreeable and familiar unto divine prophecies, being of the nature of their author, with whom a thousand years are but as one day, and therefore are not fulfilled punctually at once, but have springing and *germinant* accomplishment throughout many ages, though the height or fulness of them may refer to some one age.”—*Bacon Adv. of Learn.* p. 88.

good sense has established, and which are familiar to every scholar—we again appeal to enlightened reason; and we beseech our readers or hearers to exercise it with a perfect impartiality and with deep deliberation—still however, in reverent dependence on Him, who gave the Scriptures forth.

But having gone thus far, we are brought to the line which reason may not pass, and it becomes our *reasonable* duty, to accept the doctrines of revelation with the *faith of the little child*. Our reasoning powers must here take their rest, for they cannot compass the deep things of God, and “inspired theology,” as Lord Bacon admirably observes, “is the haven and sabbath of all man’s contemplation.”⁷

Could it indeed be shown that any of the doctrines of Christianity are contrary to reason—in other words, could they be *disproved*—we should then be compelled, not only to confess them false, but to renounce the religion to which they belong. But the fact that they are *above* reason, is so far from affording the least objection to these doctrines, that it tends only to confirm their truth; for since they form part of the counsels, or relate to the nature, of an infinite and incomprehensible Being, this fact is exactly such, as any man of plain sense would have anticipated.⁸

⁷ *Adv. of Learn.* p. 98.

⁸ “The prerogative of God extendeth as well to the reason, as to the will of man; so that as we are to obey his law, though we find a reluctance in our will; so we are to believe his word though we find a reluctance in our reason. For if we believe only that which is agreeable to our sense, we give consent to the matter and not to the author, which is no more than we would do towards a suspected and discredited witness.”—*Adv. of Learn.* p. 221.

Who does not know that there are ten thousand secrets in the book of nature, which reason cannot fathom? And who ought to feel the least degree of surprise or disquietude, in finding that there are some such secrets also, in the economy of grace? “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!”⁹

But mark the progress of unbelief. The man who fails to perceive the distinction between the province of reason and that of faith, and between things *contrary* to reason, and things *above* it, speculates on the mysterious doctrines of Christianity, and refuses to believe what he cannot comprehend. And what is his next downward step? Since doctrines, plain in their practical application, but in other respects *far beyond the reach of man's comprehension*, are clearly declared in Scripture, and are interwoven with the whole texture of the book, the sceptic who refuses to accept them, finds his belief in the inspiration, and even in the authenticity, of the sacred volume gradually undermined; and in spite of abundant and conclusive evidence to the contrary—that is to say, in direct opposition to the dictates of reason—he at length persuades himself that the Bible is a forgery, and Christianity a fable.

The doubter is now thrown back on natural religion, and openly assumes the name of *deist*; but his deism is soon discovered to be only a name; for since our most important knowledge of the Supreme Being

⁹ Rom. xi, 33.

is derived from the Bible—since the natural arguments, even for the existence of God, shine in our understandings, chiefly by the light reflected on them from the Scriptures—the man who rejects his Bible, very easily falls into a further depth of infidelity, and before very long, rejects his Creator. Now “the fool hath said in his heart there is no God;” and therefore no moral obligation, no restraint on licentiousness, no fixed principle of action! How tremendous is the consequence!—rebellion against God and man, wickedness of every description, midnight darkness instead of noonday light, and finally the dismal horrors of eternal death.

If the evidences of Christianity be not considered valid, those of any other religion adopted amongst men must certainly be regarded as unworthy even of notice. Let the young reader therefore call to mind, that the alternative does not lie between Christianity and any other system of theology, but between Christianity and *nothing*; or rather between Christianity and inextricable wickedness, misery, and confusion. Under a just sense of so terrible an alternative, let him humble himself in the sight of God, and pray to be preserved even from the smallest and earliest suggestions of “the evil heart of unbelief.”

But there is a shorter road to infidelity than that which we have now described—that is, *sin*. A man may indulge in extreme licentiousness, and practice a thousand horrible barbarities, and yet be a faithful disciple of Mahomet. In order to be a consistent follower of Budha or Bramah, he *must* break the law of God, in a fearful and murderous manner. But no

man can lead a life of sin, and be a disciple of Christ, or even long continue to believe in Christianity. For in the first place, the habitual transgressor of the law naturally pacifies his conscience, by persuading himself that there is no law; and he *loves* "darkness rather than light," because his deeds are "evil."¹ And secondly, by a judicial decree of Providence, it is the perpetual tendency of sin to harden the heart of man, and to stop his ear, and close his eye in unbelief. Again, infidelity reacts upon our sinful propensities, and never fails to impart to them a double vivacity and firmness.

On the contrary, Christianity and virtue are inseparable allies, and helpers of each other. As the religion of Christ leads directly to a life of righteousness, so a life of righteousness is ever found to brighten and enlarge our views of divine truth, and to confirm our faith in the Saviour of mankind. They who are obedient to the light which they already enjoy, shall be made partakers of more light. They who "*do the will*" of the Father, shall not only *believe* in the doctrine of the Son; they shall *know* from their own experience that it is indeed "of God."²

I cannot satisfactorily conclude these remarks with-

¹ John iii, 19.

² John vii, 17. Thus are we brought back at last to that first principle from which our whole argument has sprung—a principle of irresistible force and certainty in matters pertaining to religion—that "what is GOOD is TRUE." "In general and in sum," says Lord Bacon, "certain it is that *veritas* and *bonitas* differ but as the seal and the print; for truth prints goodness; and they be the clouds of error which descend in the storms of passions and perturbations."—*Adv. of Learn.* p. 62

out addressing a few sentences, first, to merely nominal Christians, and secondly, to the more serious and devotional professors of our holy religion.

I. It is an affecting proof of the corruption of the human heart, and of the power of him who is described as the “father of lies,” that so large a proportion of persons who profess Christianity, are, nevertheless, living *as if it were false*. They are conformed to the spirit of the world; and not only is the greater part of their time consumed in the pursuit of wealth, or in frivolous amusements, but their hearts are so filled with these objects, that the love of God has *no place* in them. Or if God and the things of his kingdom *occasionally* occupy their thoughts and feelings, the world is their principal delight; they are “double-minded,”—divided between two—and, therefore, with respect to religion, “unstable in all their ways.”³

Such a condition is one of *practical* infidelity; for although the worldling, if he thinks at all of religion, probably thinks of it as true, yet he is destitute of that vital “faith which worketh by love;” and in consequence, he is perpetually found to belie his own profession. He conducts himself as if eternity were a passing hour, and as if the present day were to last for ever.

In appealing to this numerous class of persons, I would beseech them, “by the mercies of God,” to pause in their career of carelessness, and to reflect on the unutterable *importance* of the religion which they profess. If Christianity is true, (and true we know it to be,) it is *every thing*. So vast are its doctrines,

³ James i, 8.

so high its standard of action, so overwhelming the dangers, so glorious the hopes, which it unfolds, that nothing can satisfy its just demands, short of a full devotion of our faculties to the work of our soul's salvation. By the most sacred of obligations, we are bound to fix our primary affections on God our Father whose love is the fountain of all our happiness; and since we are not "our own," but "bought with a price," it is our unquestionable duty, no longer to live unto ourselves, but "unto him who died for us and rose again."⁴

True indeed it is, that to take up our daily cross and follow Christ is difficult, and painful to the natural man; for it costs us an unconditional surrender of our secret faults, and of many of our favourite habits of thinking and acting. But Jesus has commanded us to pluck out the offending right eye, or to cut off the offending right-hand, and to cast it from us; because it is "profitable" for us that "one" of our "members should perish," and not that our "whole body should be cast into hell."⁵ And let it be remembered, that the grace of Christ is sufficient for us—that if we freely open our hearts to him, he will so change our feelings by the influence of his Spirit, that we shall account his yoke easy, his burthen light, and his cross our highest happiness.

And what will be the practical result? First, an abstinence from all things unlawful; secondly, such a pursuit of things lawful as is completely subordinate to the higher purposes of our being; and thirdly, the

⁴ 2 Cor. v, 15.

⁵ Matt. v, 29, 30.

cordial devotion of all the talents bestowed on us to the service and glory of God.

The necessity of a *decided mind* in religion is awfully manifested by the fact, that in the descriptions given by our Lord and his apostles of the day of judgment, no middle state is recognised. All men will then find their place either on the right-hand or on the left-hand of their Judge, and will finally discover that they are the heirs either of the blessing or of the curse. Is there not abundant reason to fear, that except he *now* repent, the man who weakly divides his affections between God and the world, and rests contented with only a *little* religion, will then be numbered among the “unprofitable” servants?

Independently, however, of this appalling consideration, the signs of the present times peculiarly demand *decision* in matters of religion. The powers of light and darkness are, in a very conspicuous manner, arrayed against each other. Infidelity and iniquity are lifting up their heads on high, and gathering their forces together; and, on the other hand, scriptural religion is gradually diffusing itself among men. If we continue in that divided mind which is ever marked by weakness and *instability*, we now appear to be in greater danger than ever, of being carried away captive by the influence of the wicked. But if we give up *all* for Christ, and win the Saviour for ourselves, nothing will eventually harm us. Our cause is righteous, and though our numbers may not be large, our Captain is unconquerable. May both the writer and the reader of these pages be found, in every day of darkness and dispute, clearly ranged on the side of

Christ—under the peaceful yet all-prevailing banner of the Holy One of Israel!

II. To the more serious and decided professors of Christianity I address myself under feelings of peculiar diffidence; but I trust I may be permitted briefly to allude to some of the dangers with which the church of Christ appears to be surrounded.

Were I asked what I deem to be the most common temptation to which, in the present day peculiarly, Christians are exposed, I should be inclined to reply—the substitution of *strong opinion* for that *deeply felt religious principle*, by which alone the mind can be preserved in tenderness, humility, and love to God and man. The importance of sound and orthodox views of Christianity cannot indeed be too highly estimated; because it is our bounden duty to believe the truths which our Heavenly Father condescends to reveal to us; and because it is chiefly through the medium of these views, that the heart of the believer is rightly affected towards God.

Nevertheless experience amply proves that the theory of religion may be embraced, and may even assume in the mind a very definite shape—with an outline perhaps somewhat more marked and rigid than Scripture warrants—while all that is practical and lovely in the character of the Christian continues at a low ebb. It is the frequent device of Satan to transplant the religion of the believer from the *heart* to the *head*; and this device is one with which our corrupt nature is ever prone to co-operate. For it is infinitely more easy to think and talk correctly on religious subjects, than to cultivate a deep sense of our own vileness, to

submit to the heart-searching operation of the Holy Spirit, and to walk in the narrow path of self-denial.

Hence it sometimes happens that a high religious profession is blemished by a conformity to the world—by self-indulgence—by “covetousness which is idolatry”—and above all by a hot and unsubdued temper. Even when engaged in defending the great doctrines of the gospel, Christians are sometimes tempted to lay aside that meek and quiet spirit which becomes their profession, and in the place of earnest, faithful, appeals to those whose faith in Christ is defective, to make use of offensive names and contemptuous accusations.

That all these infractions of the spirit of Christianity are extremely unfavourable to its progress in the world, is a point which admits of no question; for there is probably nothing which has a stronger tendency to encourage the prevalence of infidelity, than the various inconsistencies of believers. Far indeed am I from insinuating that the generality of serious Christians do not bring forth much—very much—of the fruit of righteousness—enough to afford an evidence that their religion is of divine origin. But might we not add strength and clearness to this evidence by aiming at a higher standard in our conduct and conversation? Ought not our light to shine with a greater degree of purity and brightness? Ought we not to “*adorn* the doctrine of God our Saviour in *all things*?” Ought we not to “be *blameless* and *harmless*, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation?”

That opinionative mind, however, which sometimes usurps the place of principle, with respect to the essentials of Christianity, is chiefly prone to fix itself on points which are non-essential and doubtful. Many such points are treated of in the present day, as if they were just as certain, and almost as vital, as the truth that God exists, and as the cardinal, saving, doctrines of the gospel.

In making this remark I do not so much refer to matters connected with modes of worship and church government, as to questions on which, independently of all sectarian classification, *individuals* are found to entertain very different sentiments. Such questions, for example, are the nature and character of the Millennium—its near or distant approach—the continuance of miraculous gifts in the church—the outward and personal reign of the Messiah—and the probable period of his coming.

Whatsoever we may think on these and similar subjects, we ought surely to exercise a holy watchfulness that we may never exaggerate their importance, or suffer our minds to be filled with them, to the exclusion of indispensable truth as well as of practical godliness. If we would experience preservation from such a danger, we must dwell in humility before God, and seek the rectifying influence of the Holy Spirit, who, while he teaches us to value every part of divine truth, will never fail to unfold it to our understandings, and impress it on our hearts, in its *just* and unalterable *proportions*.

When those questions in religion which are *not* essential, assume in our minds an undue magnitude

and certainty—whether they be the distinctions of sects, or only of individuals—the frequent consequence is a harsh judgment of our brethren, and a breach of that love and charity which ought always to bind together the members of the militant church. Never, perhaps, was there a period, when the exhortation of Paul was more seasonable than in the present day. “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all *lowliness* and *meekness*, with *long suffering*, *forbearing* one another in *love*, endeavouring to keep the *unity of the Spirit* in the bond of *peace*.”⁶

Let us remember that Christ is even now our almighty and ever present King, who rules over his children by his Spirit; and that as we obey its dictates we shall learn to imitate the example of Jesus himself. Now *charity*, *brotherly love*, and *humility*, are the virtues, in reference to which, above all others, this perfect pattern is proposed to us in Scripture. “This is my commandment that ye love one another, as I have loved you.”⁷ “If I then your Lord and Master have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.”⁸ “Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be *like minded one toward another* according to (or after the example of) Christ Jesus.”⁹ “Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of

⁶ Eph. iv, 1—3.

⁸ John xiii, 14, 15.

⁷ John xv, 12.

⁹ Rom xv, 5.

mind, let each esteem other better than themselves; *let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,*"¹ &c.

The principles which are common to all sound and devotional Christians, are of infinite strength and efficacy—amply sufficient to unite in holy fellowship, multitudes who entertain very different opinions on subordinate questions in religion. In this union, under the providence and grace of God lies the strength of our cause. May it never be severed! And may the happy period be hastened when pure and primitive Christianity shall abound in the world, and reign triumphant in the hearts of all men!

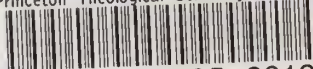
¹ Phil. ii, 2—5; *comp.* 1 Pet. ii, 20, 21.

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